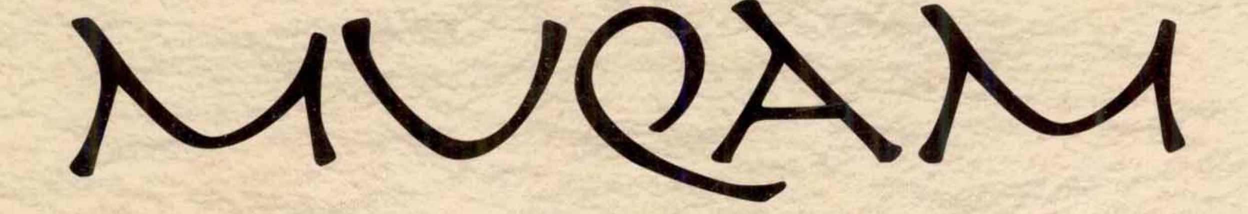
By Han Ziyong



Traditional Xinjiang Uyghur



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图书在版编目（CIP）数据

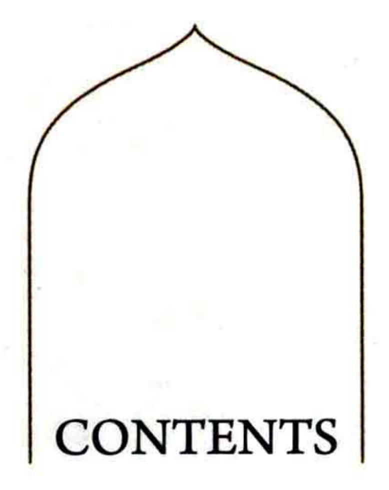
木卡姆：英文 / 韩子勇著. -- 北京：外文出版社, 2010.12
ISBN 978-7-119-06866-4
Ⅰ.①木… Ⅱ.①韩… Ⅲ.①维吾尔族—民族音乐—中国—英文 Ⅳ.①J607.215
中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2010)第264888号

英文翻译： 王 玮 姜晓宁 王 琴 刘奎娟
英文审定： Edmond Hare 王明杰
责任编辑： 杨春燕 杨 璐
装帧设计： 吾昱设计工作室
印刷监制： 张国祥

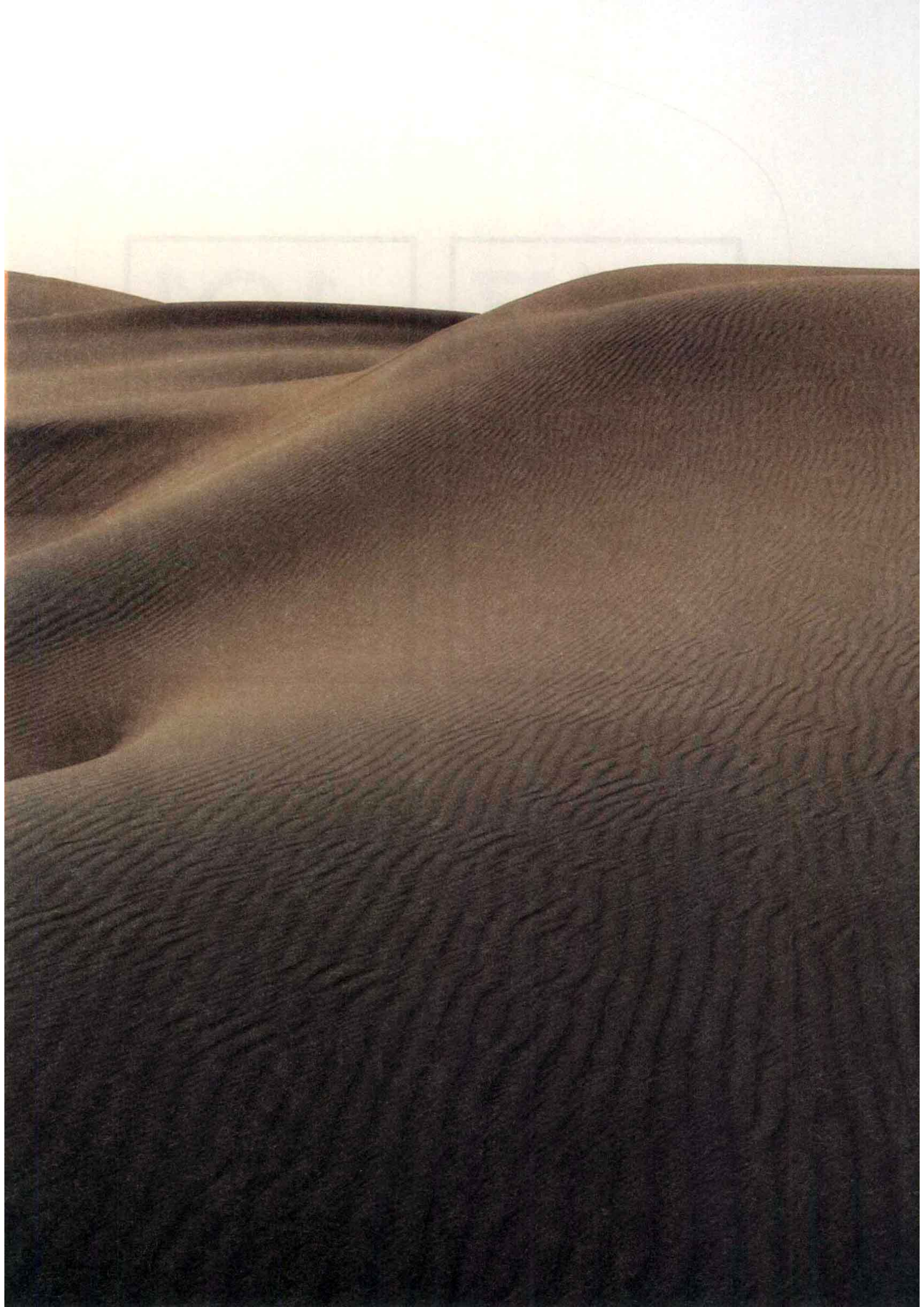
木卡姆

韩子勇 著

出 版 人：呼宝民
总 编 辑：李振国
出版发行：
外文出版社有限责任公司（中国北京百万庄大街24号）
邮政编码： 100037
网　　址： http://www.flp.com.cn
电　　话： 008610—68320579（总编室）
008610—68995852（发行部）
008610—68327750（版权部）
印　　刷： 北京外文印刷厂
开　　本： 787mm × 1092mm 1/32 **印 张：** 5
2011年1月第1版第1次印刷
（英）
ISBN 978-7-119-06866-4
11800（平）



CONTENTS



I am a waste trader

With bonfire as my throne

And shed my palace

The world is to me in ruins

While my left cheek is burned by flames of love

My right cheek is still glowing in the love ballads

… …

The lyrics above are quoted from the materials of field research about Muqam by the Xinjiang Arts Research Institute.

While the blurred video images are like long abandoned oasis which has been eroded by salinization, the chanting of the singer on the video refreshes us like green trees fresh from rain. Yes, that's it—it is the musical spirit of the Western Regions, and the whirl of passion sweeping through sands, over wilderness and beyond the oasis ….

Sometimes it seems that both God and the common Chinese farmwife apply similar fundamental philosophies in life. Both, for example, tend to endow children living under the harshest conditions with the best things as compensation, and both hide what they hold most dear to them in the obscurest of places.

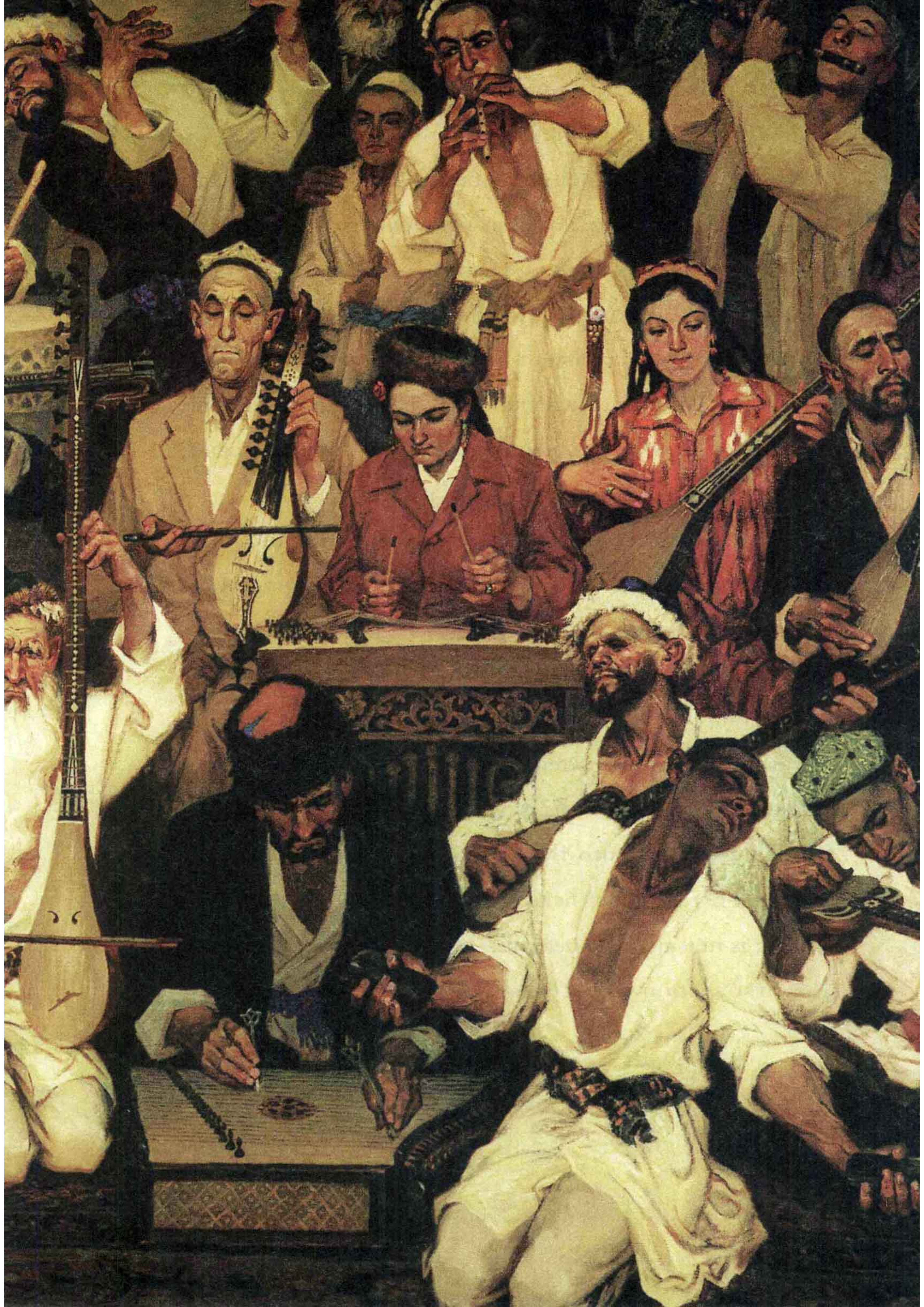
Beyond a Piece of Painting

Of the vast body of artwork that is based on Uyghur Muqam, Ghazi Emet's oil painting Muqam is the most famous piece. It is considered the quintessential piece in Xinjiang artwork. Most people remember the image forever just by seeing its reproduction.

The painting has been utilized for the public benefit on two separate occasions. The first time was at the Xinjiang Folk Music Symphony Concert "Overflowing Spring on Mount Tianshan." It served as a concert backdrop and looked splendid under the limelight. It was used for a second time in Xinjiang's application for intangible cultural heritage of humanity candidacy to UNESCO. It was selected as the most important illustration for the entry form.

Born of the desert, Muqam is regarded as the rose of the oasis. In an otherwise barren landscape, it is as refreshing





as sweet spring water. It epitomizes the aspirations and the dreams of the people of the desert.

Along the western border of China and far from the ocean, the heart of the Eurasian continent conceals a celestial musical treasure bestowed by Heaven—Muqam.

The remarkable existence of the oasis is a miracle that persists in spite of constant encroachment by the Gobi. Under such harsh natural conditions, the spread of Muqam is a wonder. Beyond the monotonous and desolate horizon, Muqam is like a magnificent musical palace.

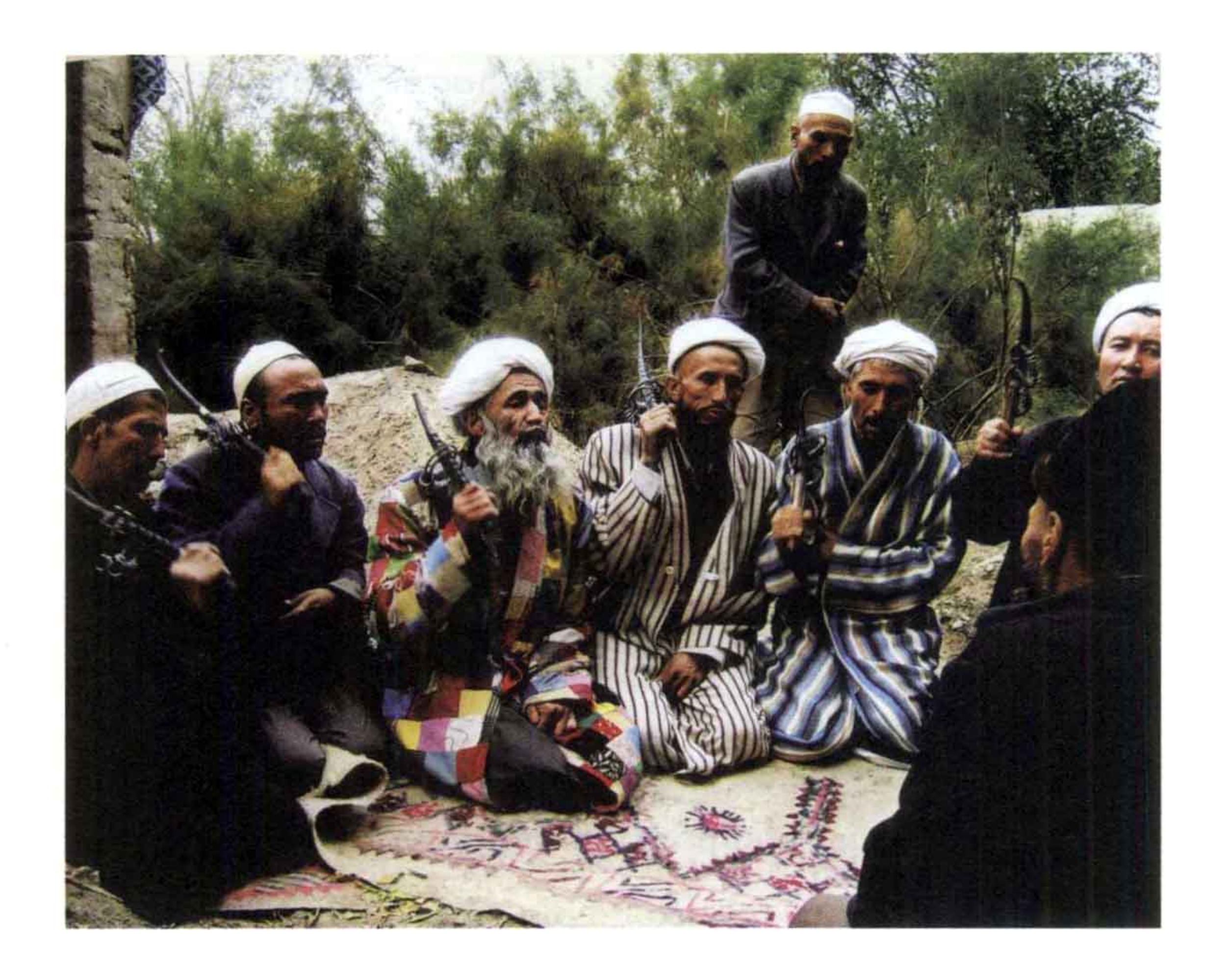
Though I have seen many artworks about Muqam, only Ghazi Emet's oil painting comes close to embodying both its form and essence.

Muqam is fervent. The passion involved is as boundless as the vast and roaring ocean. Even if it is minute and withers into ash, yet it is more extensive and ardent than the desert.

Muqam is tragic. The oasis is as lonely as the desert is vast. The tears merged into flood, shaking the oasis and the Gobi, and breaking our hearts.

Muqam is musing. The beautiful tune of the Congnaghman (the first section of each part of the Twelve Muqams)

Muqam, painted by Ghazi Emet



played with the Satar and the melody about touching love story are often heard on the oasis.

Muqam is hilarious. Mashrep (the third section of each part of Twelve Muqams) is performed for carnivals in the oasis. The happy atmosphere is so infectious that the dying and desperate compete to join the celebration, and even the dead under the ground are awakened to dance.

Muqam is complicated. Its rhythm and length is just like

Gathering of Ashiks,
photo by Dang Chenghua

rolling vast desert, with growing chorus of musical notes overlapping until drowned in clamor.

Muqam is grand. It takes one day and one night to perform Twelve Muqams. These works weren't transcribed into musical scores until recently. They were passed down through the generations orally by folk musicians and artists; a tradition that requires a remarkable memory, as well as immense and enduring enthusiasm to preserve it.

Muqam is hard to describe. Muqam is a complicated composite of songs, dances, music and poetry—it is an integration of neat composition and improvisation, reason and passion; it is an inspiring epic, with gracious yet wild, joyous yet dolorous features.

Ghazi Emet's oil painting Muqam features over 20 carefully selected Muqam artists. They come in all shapes and sizes. They play Muqam on the farms, in restaurants, by rotisseries, at the blacksmith's forges, in winding alleys, at village schools—some are seniors with gray hair, some are muscular men with dark skin, and some are handsome young men. Muqam is infused in their bodies and souls, which reek of the melodious Muqam tune.



Tursun and his Student,
photo by Dang Chenghua

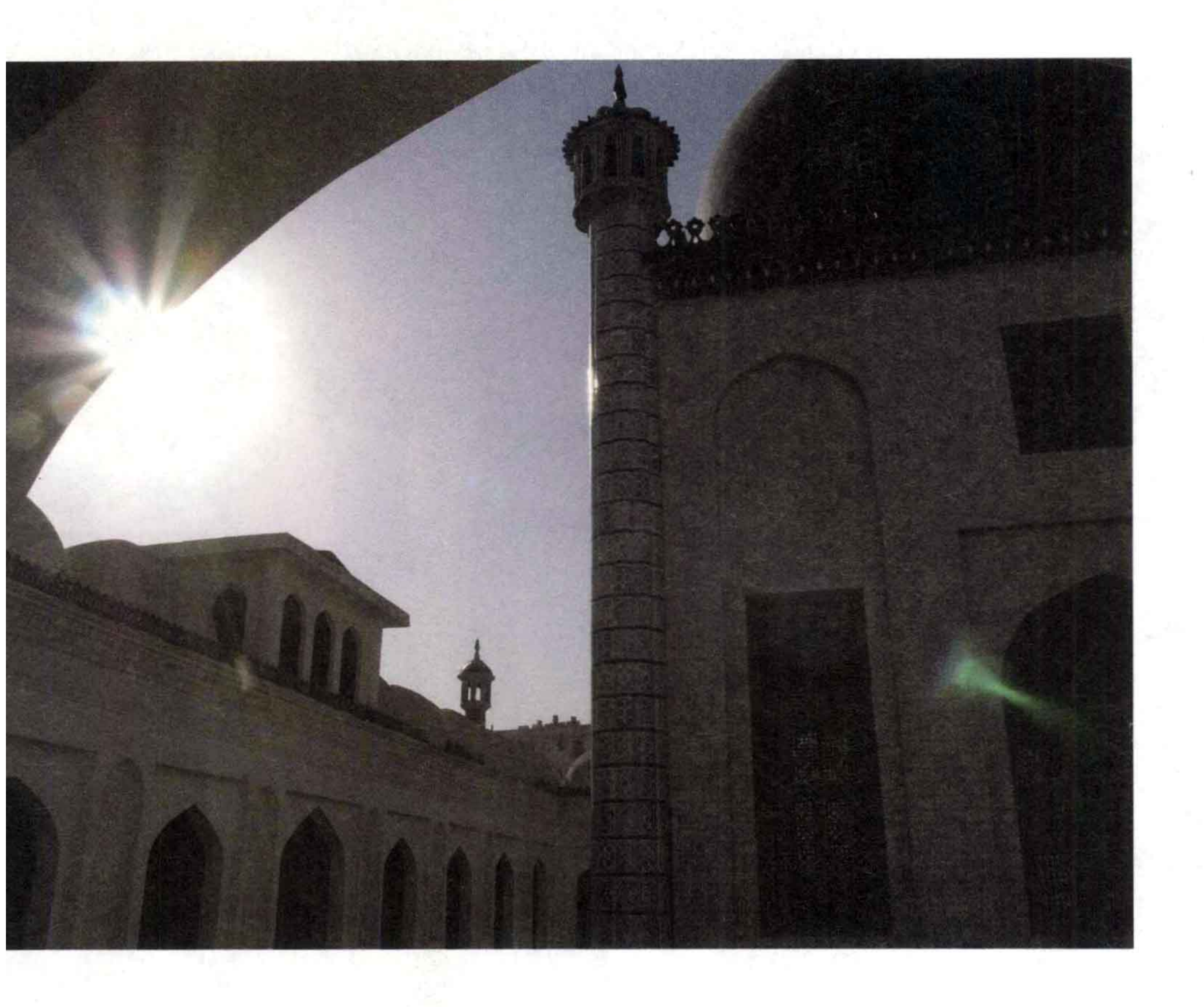
These saints of music enjoy the happiness brought about by music. They sing and play Muqam in a manner that is sometimes serious, sometimes excited, but always in a way that tells the story taking place on the oasis through ages.

The painting Muqam is grandiose and gorgeous. The holiness of Muqam music conveyed in the painting harmonizes every color and image, creating an atmosphere of vigor and selflessness.

If only one art form should be chosen as the representative of the Western Region's culture, music undoubtedly has incomparable superiorities to other forms. As the microcosm of the Western Region's culture, it encompasses dances, songs, and draws inspiration from epics, folklores, and classic poetry. Even the imam's ritual is performed in melodious chanting.

The Western Region's music is pervasive in every important moment of daily life. In a word, among all the art forms of the Western Region, music is the one that exercises the most profound influence both historically and today.

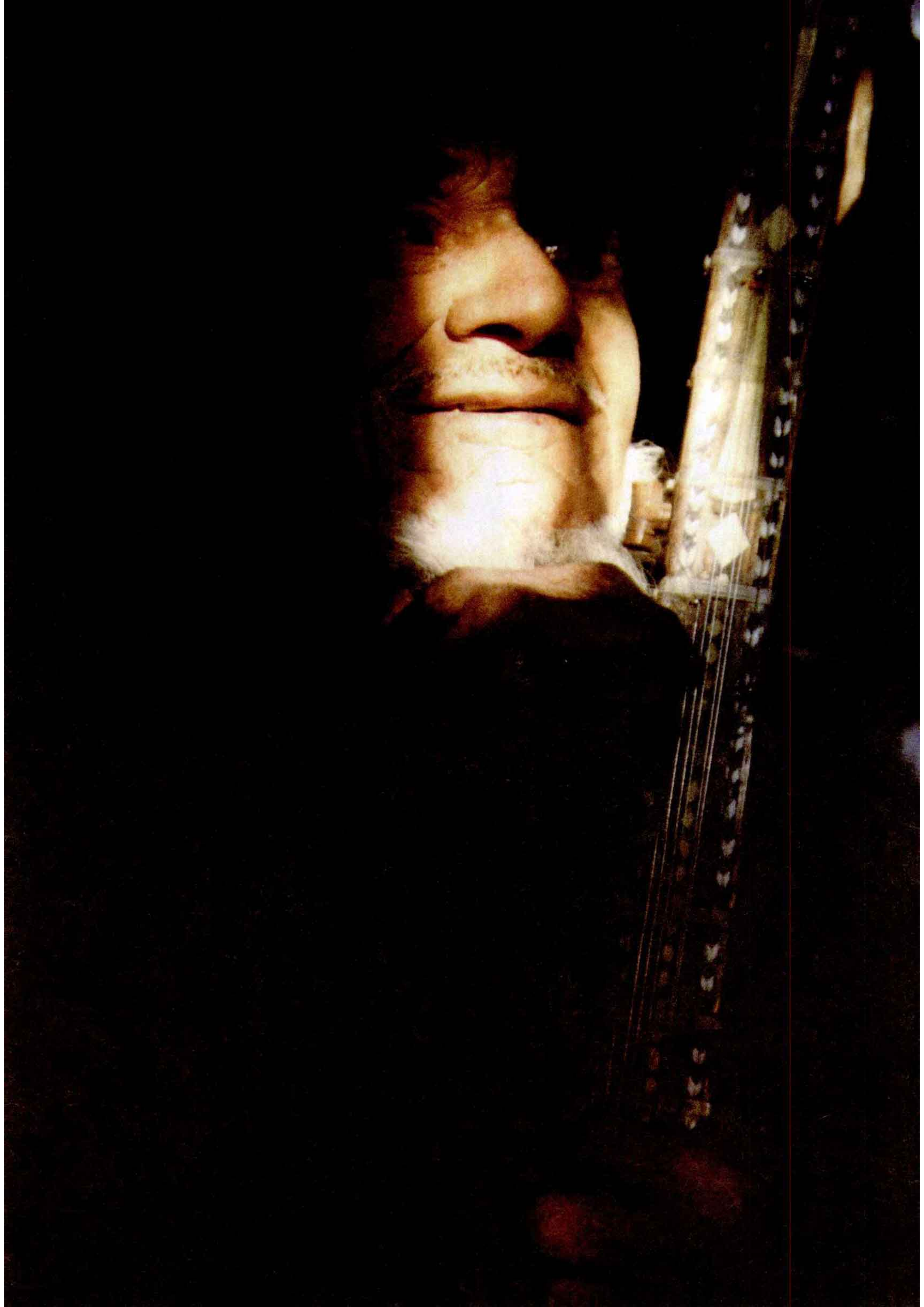
As the most important aspect of the Uyghur peoples' cultural heritage and as a gem of Chinese musical culture,



Muqam not only retains diverse music features of different ethnic groups on the oasis but also reflects the confluence of Eastern and Western musical culture.

Muqam is not only the treasure of Uyghur, but also that of China and the world.

photo by Han Ziyong



Chapter I
Journey Carpeted with Blooming Flowers

Like salt, fruits and wind, true music is also an element of the daily life on the oasis.

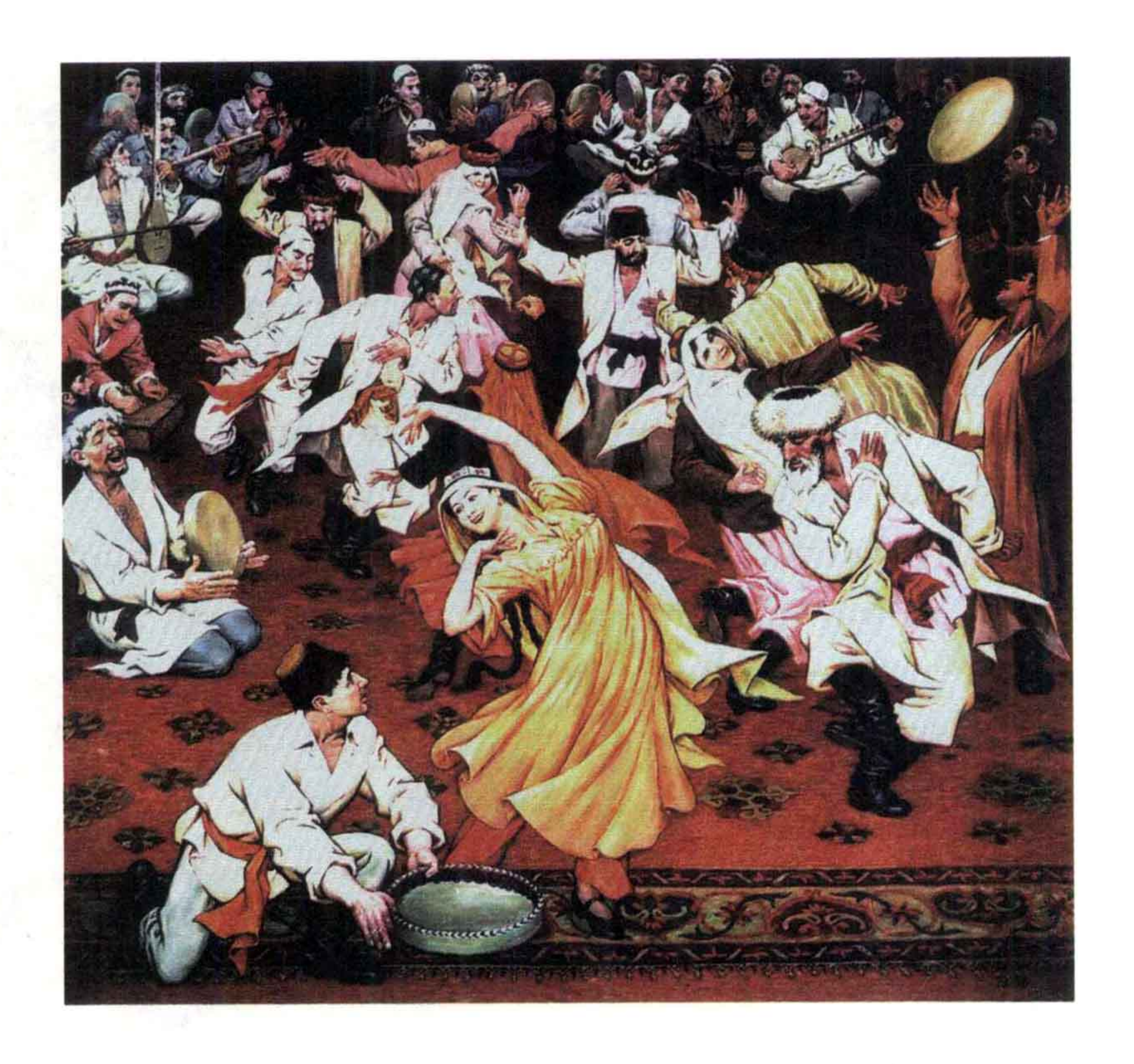
Photo by Kurbanjan

Music, in my eyes, is not a luxury off-limits to common people or an ivory tower to harbor only artists. True music should be created and at the same time enjoyed by people. It should be a part of everyday life in the oasis, like the basic elements in our life such as salt, wheat, fruits and wind.

In Xinjiang, art and life are inseparable. This is contrary to the increasing separation of art and life prevailing nowadays: Art has been stereotyped as a profession. So entertaining has become a routine, and performers are thus isolated from the audience since they are from different walks of life with different schedules for work and leisure. A standard procedure or format is imposed upon art performances. Now there are rigid time, location, style and pattern constraints—nobody finds it hard to distinguish farmers from musicians, eating from enjoying symphony.

In Xinjiang, singing and dancing often occur spontaneously. They are as natural as other typical happenings in everyday life which refresh the body and soul.

The barren and dry road along the Gobi in the Western Region is also a journey carpeted with blooming flowers. The people living on this land have made a hobby out of singing and dancing in spite



of all adversities, which is particularly embodied in their creation of Uyghur Muqam.

Uyghur Muqam is most encyclopedic among the vast reserve of musical culture in Xinjiang.

Muqam is like a palace of music.

Amidst the joyous music played over dozens of instruments,

Hearty dancing,
painted by Ghazi Emet



which draws inspiration from folk epics and ballads, numerous dancers, young and old, sway and whirl, turning the vast land into an ocean of blooming flowers. This scene is as grand as a palace complex, glittering like stars on the oasis of Mount Tianshan.

If we compare the Western Region's music with the starry night,

Sama, painted by Ghazi Emet

Muqam is the Milky Way; if we compare the Western Region's music with sand, Muqam is the boundless Taklimakan; if we compare the Western Region's music with trees on the oasis, Muqam is the dancing polar seen everywhere on the oasis.

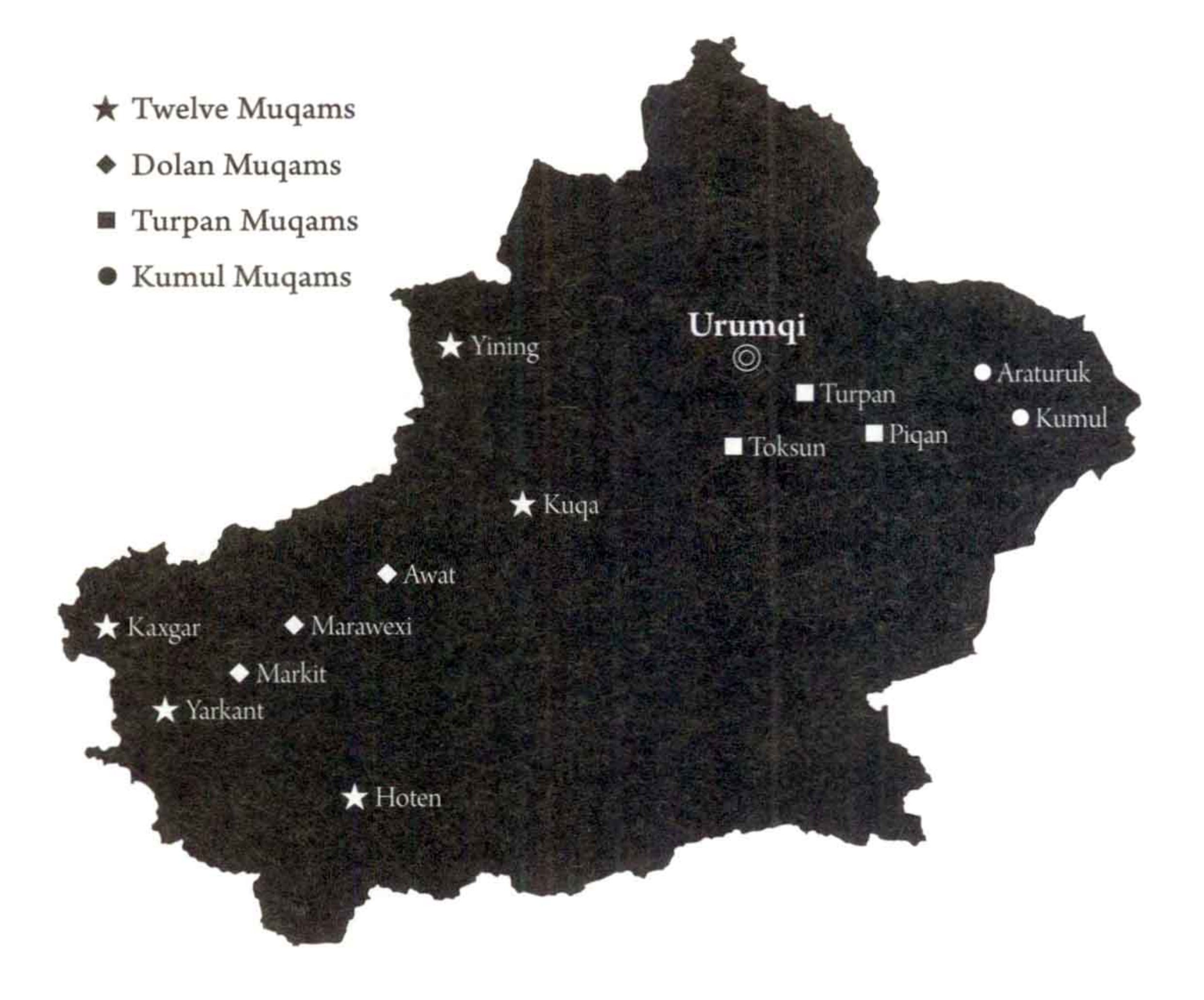
When it comes to arts, the art of Uyghur Muqam is one of the amazing legends of the Western Region. It is a cultural phenomenon popular in many countries and regions such as Central Asia, South Asia, Western Asia, North Africa, and is typical of the desert oasis. Muqam cast a spell of romance on mysterious and exotic Islamic culture—we may say we could find the presence of the omnipresent Allah both in a grain of sand and Muqam, the divine music on the earth and gift for our souls.

It is believed that "Muqam" is coined based on the Arabic word Makamah, which means "collection".[1] There is much controversy over the definitions of Muqam.

There are nine definitions of Muqam summarized by the famous Chinese musician Zhou Ji, who has contributed enormously to the research and dissemination of the art of Muqam after classifying different schools of opinions.

1. It is defined according to the position of its performance. It was once referred to as the platform on which the singer

1. Liu Weixin: complier, Dictionary on Ethnic Studies in Northwest China, Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 1998, P. 470.



performed in front of the Caliph. This definition is hardly convincing as music was forbidden in the early period of the Arab Empire and was deemed unacceptable during the Ottoman Empire.

2. It is defined as "rule", "principle", and "criterion". In the Uyghur language, the word "Muqam" is used in the sense of its wider connotations such as a criterion, which means

Map of the Disseminating Range of Uyghur Muqam

"perfection", e.g. "it is as matchless as Muqam".[2]

3. It means "tone", "mode", and "phoneme". Musicians can play different scales and thus form various modes, since fingers change positions when they perform Muqam. This is the definition in the encyclopedia of the former Soviet Union.

4. It is defined as tunes. In Uyghur language, Muqam means "tunes".

5. It means rhythm.

6. It means specific space and special composition method.

7. It means musical genre and divertimento, etc.

8. It means free-meter songs. Uyghur folk artists like to change Muqam into free-meter tunes, and sing upon being asked to perform Muqam.

9. It means improvisation.

In the report for application to UNESCO, the "Xinjiang Uyghur Muqam" is defined as "a large-scale composite form of art synthesizing songs, dances and music, and is the general term for a variety of Muqam practices widespread among the Uyghur communities in China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The term 'Muqam' in contemporary Uyghur language has several meanings besides its basic definition as 'large-scale music suites'.

2. Abdulshukur Muhammad Imin (trans. By Yang Jinxiang): *On Uyghur Classical Music— Twelve Muqams*, Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 1985, P.4.

The word can also mean 'principle', 'criterion', 'tunes', 'fixed melodic sequence of suites' and 'free-meter preludes (both sung and instrumental)'. In the context of Uyghur culture, though, 'Muqam' has encompassed profound connotations beyond mere artistic expression, and has come to include literature, music, dance, narrative, drama, cultural identity, and religious beliefs."

In the preface to the thirteen-volume *Uyghur Twelve Muqams* published by the Encyclopedia of China Publishing House in 1997, the Twelve Muqams are described as a gem among the cultural treasures of the Chinese nation. It was created by the industrious and innovative Uyghur people, and now serves as an encyclopedia about the life and society of the Uyghur people. By employing various artistic expressions such as literature, music, dance and drama, it helps to reveal the colorful life of the Uyghur people. Congnaghman, as an important component of Muqam, was called Daqu in ancient times. Since the 12th century, Daqu was gradually replaced by the Arabic word Muqam. No matter what connotations it denotes in terms of etymology, it is in fact a proper noun referring to a complete set of suites. Since the 14th century, Chagatai, the ancient Uyghur language, has absorbed quite a number of words from Arabic and Farsi. These words were



used in the fields of literature, art, music and even in describing Muqam."

Most of the Muqam music in the world is found to be bred on the desert oasis as large-scale music suites and musical heritage. It

Prior to Performing on Stage, painted by Iminjan Abdurehim

contains cultural elements of both nomadic life and agricultural life. It is often improvisational and has a strong folk flavor.

The emergence of the Arab Empire and the transmission of Islam gave rise to the spread of Arabic which exercised so much influence upon the musical heritage in its style and contents that the suites eventually ended up being named after the Arabic word Muqam.

But Muqam practices vary greatly from place to place, which is attributable to the national differences in culture, differences in times and geology.[3] The name of each set of Muqam is affected accordingly.

Based on careful historical research, both Han and Uyghur scholars believe that Xiyu (or Western Region, a term used in the Han Dynasty for areas west of Yumenguan, including present Xinjiang and parts of Central Asia) Daqu popular in Han and Tang dynasties is closely connected with Xinjiang Uyghur Muqam.

The word "Daqu" was first introduced to the Central Plains by the Envoy Zhang Qian back in the Han Dynasty from the Western Region. Today, in the Uyghur language "Daqu" is equivalent to congnaghman, the first section of each part of the Twelve Muqams. According to the famous scholars, Guan Yewei and Abdulshukur,

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3. Tumur Dawamet: "Uyghur Twelve Muqams—Preface" from *Uyghur Twelve Muqams*, compiled by Xinjiang Muqam Research Association and Uyghur Classical Literature Research Association, Encyclopedia of China Publishing House, 1997.

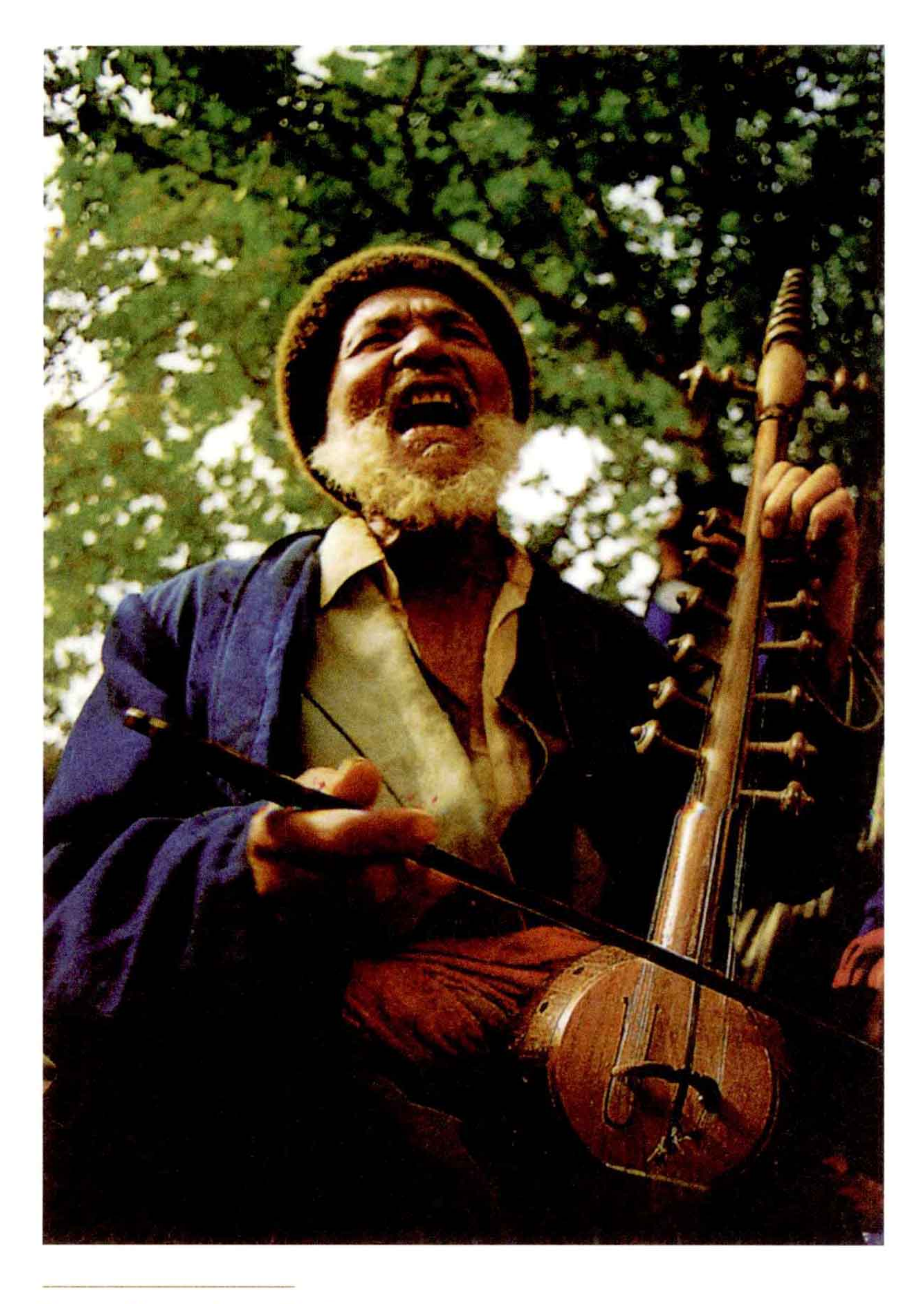
the word "Muqam" first appeared in the form of Maka-ykne in the *Story of Alanami* written in Tocharian in about the 4th century A.D. In Tocharian, "Maka" means "a large number", "abundance" and "ykne" means "tunes" and "melody", so Maka-ykne together is "Daqu" (literally, great tunes). The Arabic word "Muqam" came into common use much later.

The Uyghur Muqam is a large-scale musical heritage and also a composite form of art synthesizing songs, dances and music. The content of its songs are composed of classic poetry Gazal,[4] ballads, and epics, serving as an encyclopedia about the life and society of the Uyghur people. As a favorite subject in all art works, the love story is often the dominant theme of the lyrics.

As the main representative of Uyghur Muqam, each one of the Twelve Muqams is divided into three sections: congnaghman (a series of lyric songs, instrumental pieces, and sung music accompanied by dancing), Dastan (a series of ballads, narrative songs and instrumental music), and Mashrep (a series of sung music accompanied by dancing).

Accompanying the elegant tune of congnahman are the lyrics Gazal; the touching ballads which constitute the second section of Muqam, dastan; and lively and cheerful folk dancing is the

4. As rhyming couplets, Gazals are often used in love ballads.

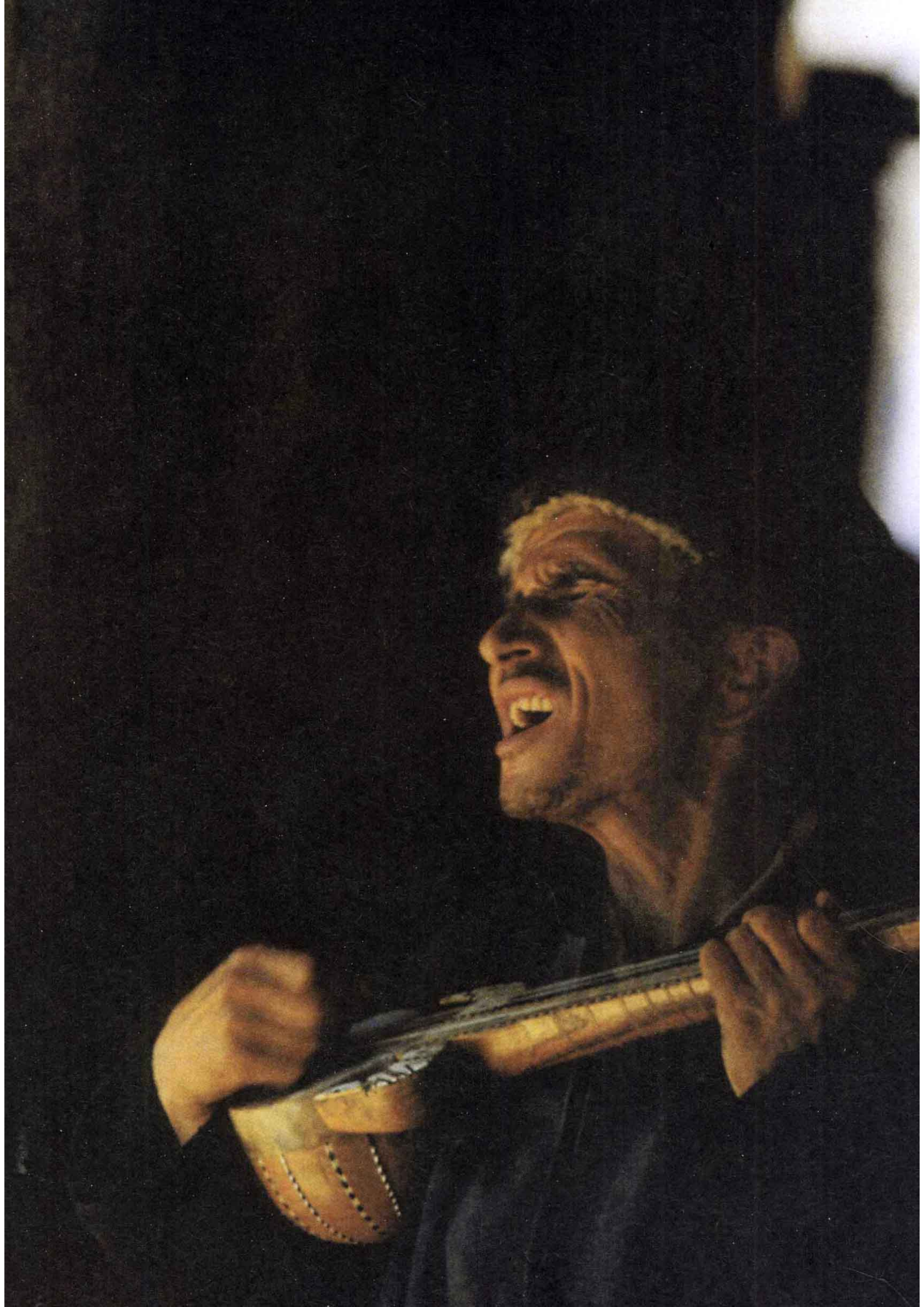


Essence of Muqam, photo by Zhao Junan

component of the third section, Mashrep.

Muqam is like a beautiful woman—Congnaghman is her intelligent mind, Dastan her supple and slim body, Mashrep her dancing feet. Muqam is a masterpiece in music, epitomizing the lasting passion and love of Uyghur people for music.

The Silk Road was the first site of major cross-cultural interaction between major Asian and European civilizations. It also happens to be where Muqam continues to prosper the most. Lying at the hub of the Silk Road, the journey to the Western Region and its typical oasis environments is an exhausting and long road, yet with the company of Muqam it is changed into one carpeted with blooming flowers.



Chapter II
Twelve Muqams

One man walking alone on the horizon,
recollecting the past

Singer, photo by Shen Qiao

Congnaghman

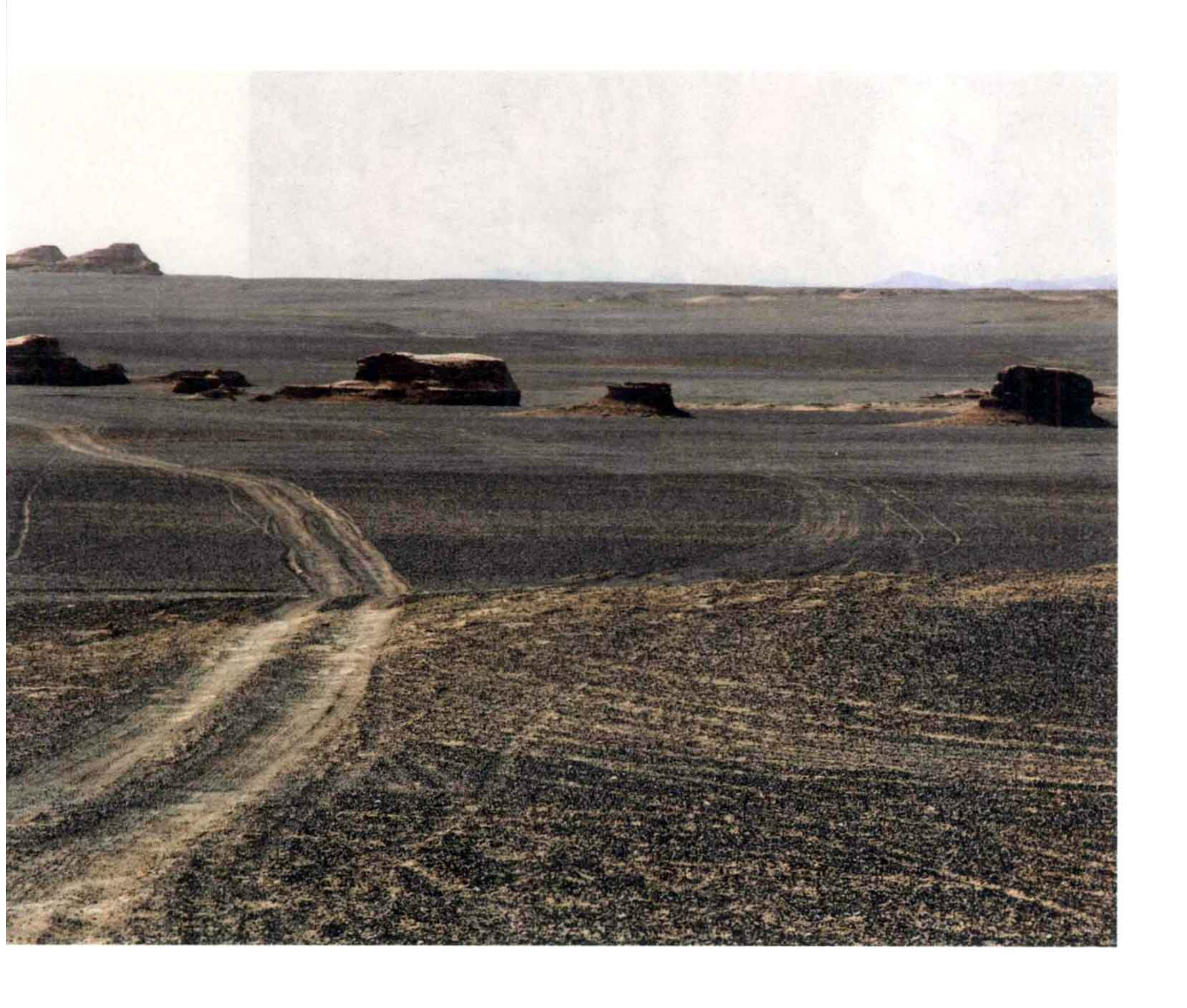
Twelve Muqams, as the twelve large-scale music suites, lead our souls up to heaven.

In listening to Twelve Muqams, it seems that you are wandering alone along the rolling desert, lost in your thoughts. All the emotions about reminiscence and parting are contained in the first part of Twelve Muqams—Congnaghman, i.e., Daqu, which is the first section of every set of Twelve Muqams.

Congnaghman is translated into 穹乃额曼 in Chinese. In Uyghur language, 穹(qiong) means "great", and "乃额曼" (naieman) means "music", so together they mean great music, which the locals call "daqu". While in mandarin Chinese, 穹(qiong) means "sky", and 穹乃额曼 means "music under the sky".

Congnaghman is the longest section of each Twelve Muqam, taking up two thirds of its length. Boasting a long history, congnaghman is said to be originated from Xiyu Daqu once popular in Han and Tang dynasties.

In revising the entry form of *The Art of Chinese Xinjiang Uyghur Muqams* to be reported to UNESCO drafted by Zhou Ji, we are hesitant as to how to define the relation of the two musical forms.



It is always a thorny problem in history to record sound and music, and people always resort to the second-hand archaeological materials in this regard. The beautiful Xiyu Daqu has been lost to the world, leaving its trace only on patched fresco walls, over musical instruments buried in tombs or behind classic poems.

photo by Han Ziyong



As we know, the clamor of life is finally obliterated in history, untraceable in the passages of time. But in the history of the Western Region and assimilation of different ethnic groups, for example, in 840, when the Uyghur people moved westward to Tarim Basin, Xiyu Daqu, instead of falling into obscurity, reemerged in a new and hybrid form of Muqam in their change from nomadic life to farming. Besides, Xiyu Daqu is still traceable in Congnaghman, the first part of Muqam.

Twelve Muqams, as the representative of Uyghur Muqams, are the most complete and comprehensive in its content. Princess

Dancing, painted by Niu Jun

Amannisahan and chief court musician Kedirhan of Yankant Kingdom in the 16th century had collected and sorted out 16 sets, but only 12 large-scale suites are extant today, and each of them lasts some two hours and the whole set takes 24 hours to complete. We have collected the part lasting for some 20 hours, which is incomplete in structure.

Flawed beauty can provoke our sense of fantasy. For example, armless Venus and the Great Pyramid of Khufu sliced on his nose.

The Twelve Muqams consist of twelve large-scale suites, namely the Rak Muqam, Chebiyat Muqam, Segah Muqam, Chargah Muqam, Panjigah Muqam, Uzhal Muqam, Adjem Muqam, Oshaq Muqam, Bayat Muqam, Nawa Muqam, Mushawrak Muqam and Iraq Muqam.[5]

From the 1980s, more works about Muqam were unveiled with much investigation and efforts by the researchers, for example, Amannisahan's work "Ishret Enggiz" (the exciting chapter). This piece composes 92 classic poems and 20 folksongs accompanied by 11 tunes. At the same time, Abicheshme (tears), the concluding part or epilogue of "Twelve Muqams" and Mustazat,[6] one piece of music in Congnaghman, were also discovered. They are among the 39 tunes completed with 244 classic poems. Besides, the discovery

5. Rak, the first suite of the Muqam, meaning "pure" and "exclusive". It is also called Rag, meaning "pulse", or "artery". Chebiyat is the title of the second suite. Segah, the third suite, means the third stage. Chargah, the fourth suite, means the fourth stage. Panjigah, the fifth suite, means the fifth stage. Uzhal, the sixth suite, means "the personal situation", "sadness" or "pain". Adjem refers to non-Arabic countries or non-Arabs and mostly Iran or Iranians. The second suite is Oshaq, and the eighth means "lover". Bayat, the ninth suite, is one tribe of ancient Turkic people. The tenth suite is Nawa, meaning "sound", or "chirp". Mushawrak is the eleventh, meaning exciting. Iraq is the last suite.

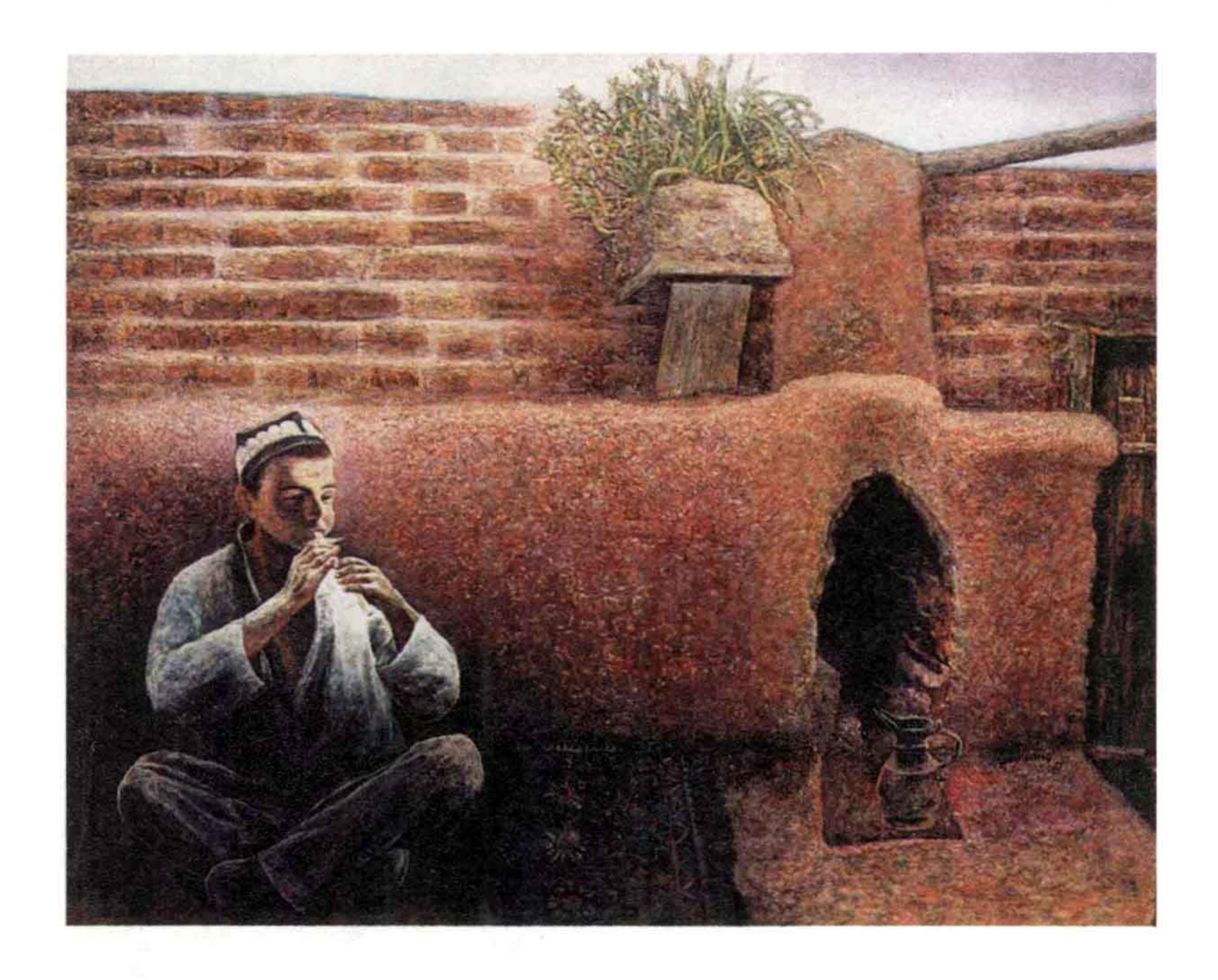
6. Mustazat is the title of one section of music in congnaghman.



of Rak Muqam and Chebiyat Muqam supplements this set. The newly discovered "Ishret Enggiz", Rak Muqam and Chebiyat Muqam are all collected in the thirteenth book on "Twelve Muqams"—*Abicheshme and Ishret Enggiz.*

Twelve Muqams are mainly circulating in South Xinjiang and Yili River Valley. "Ili Muqam" is a variation of the "Twelve Muqams"; "Turpan Muqam", influenced by "Twelve Muqams", is similar in many aspects. Yet, Twelve Muqams are not equivalent with

Beating drum, photo by Liang Li

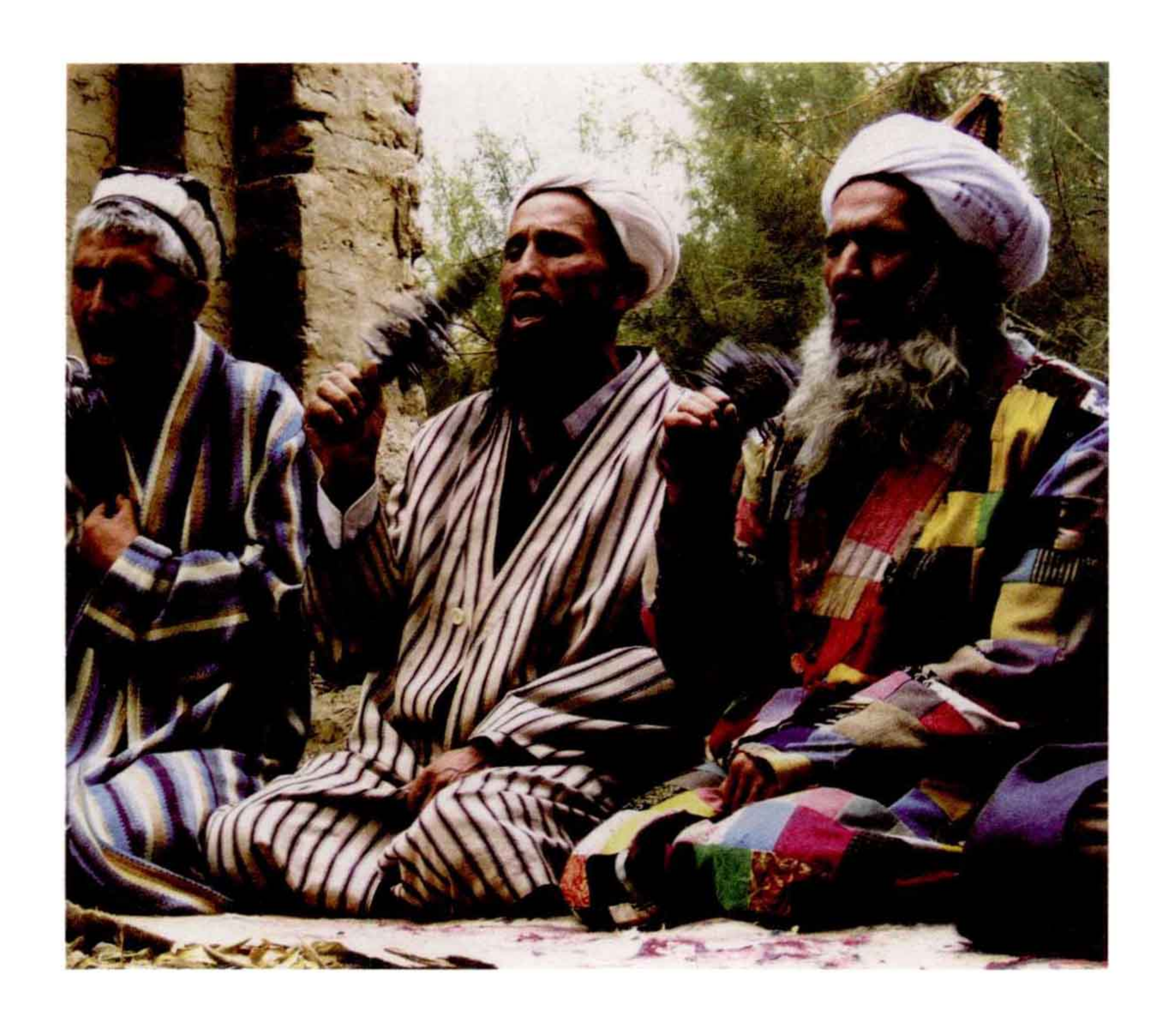


Uyghur Muqam. For example, Dolan Muqams and Hami Muqams are very different from Twelve Muqams. The origin, development and transition of Uyghur Muqam are interrelated like a web—the development of musical culture is influenced by a combination of forces. "The culture and music of Uyghur people, emerging from its large number of tribes scattered in various regions, took on an encyclopedic feature."[7]

Therefore, in revising the candidature entry form of "The Art of

Playing balaman at ease, painted by Wang Yongsheng

7. Tumur Dawamet: preface to Uyghur Twelve Muqams



Chinese Xinjiang Uyghur Muqam" to be submitted to UNESCO, it is clarified after repeated discussion that "The Art of Chinese Xinjiang Uyghur Muqam" instead of "Twelve Muqams" is adopted since Uyghur Muqam has broader meaning lexically and factually. The first section of Congnaghman is usually focused on stringed music playing and singing in the form of solo or sometimes punctuated with accompaniment, without dancing or rarely with

Ashik's performance,
photo by Dang Chenghua

the accompaniment of various typical Xinjiang drums. It sounds gentle and melodious, like sobbing when it is sentimental and soaring to the sky when it is high-pitched.

As the tune of Congnaghman is elegant, solemn and melodious, it takes on the feature of "elegant music". In some regions, the folk artists who are able to perform Congnaghman are called "muqamqi".[8] As time slips by, Congnaghman was vanishing at the fastest pace because of the change in social transformation and people's aesthetic principle. What the folk artists play and transmit most are Dastan and Mashrep which are closely related to everyday life. Muqam as the intangible cultural heritage is on the verge of being lost, for lack of successors of Muqam artists.

Most of the lyrics of Congnaghman are from the poetry of the literati in history. In Twelve Muqams, there are all together 209 classic poems used in its lyrics, and poet Nawai tops the list with 53 of his poems selected. Besides, Mahzun, Meshrep, and Jilil are also among the list. These poems are also the important heritage of Uyghur classic literature.

Saturated with rich emotions, these beautiful and elegant lines of poems display great literary value and fully reflect the ethnic characteristics and soul. The pervasive tension, extraordinary

8. "Qi" in "muqamqi", "dastanqi", "manasiqi", and "jianggeerqi" refers to people who are skilled in certain feats in Altaic language.

beauty and overwhelming passion beyond the lines, when put into music, are as splendid as the feast over the velvet spread table. For example, the lyrics excerpts from the Congnaghman in Adjem Muqam, the seventh suite of the Twelve Muqams, from prelude to Taizi[9].

Prelude: Glorious Emperor

There have lived numerous emperors in history

But you are the one as matchlessly generous and benevolent as Husraw,

You are a wise emperor hardly seen in history

Peace and prosperity are attributable to your longevity and health

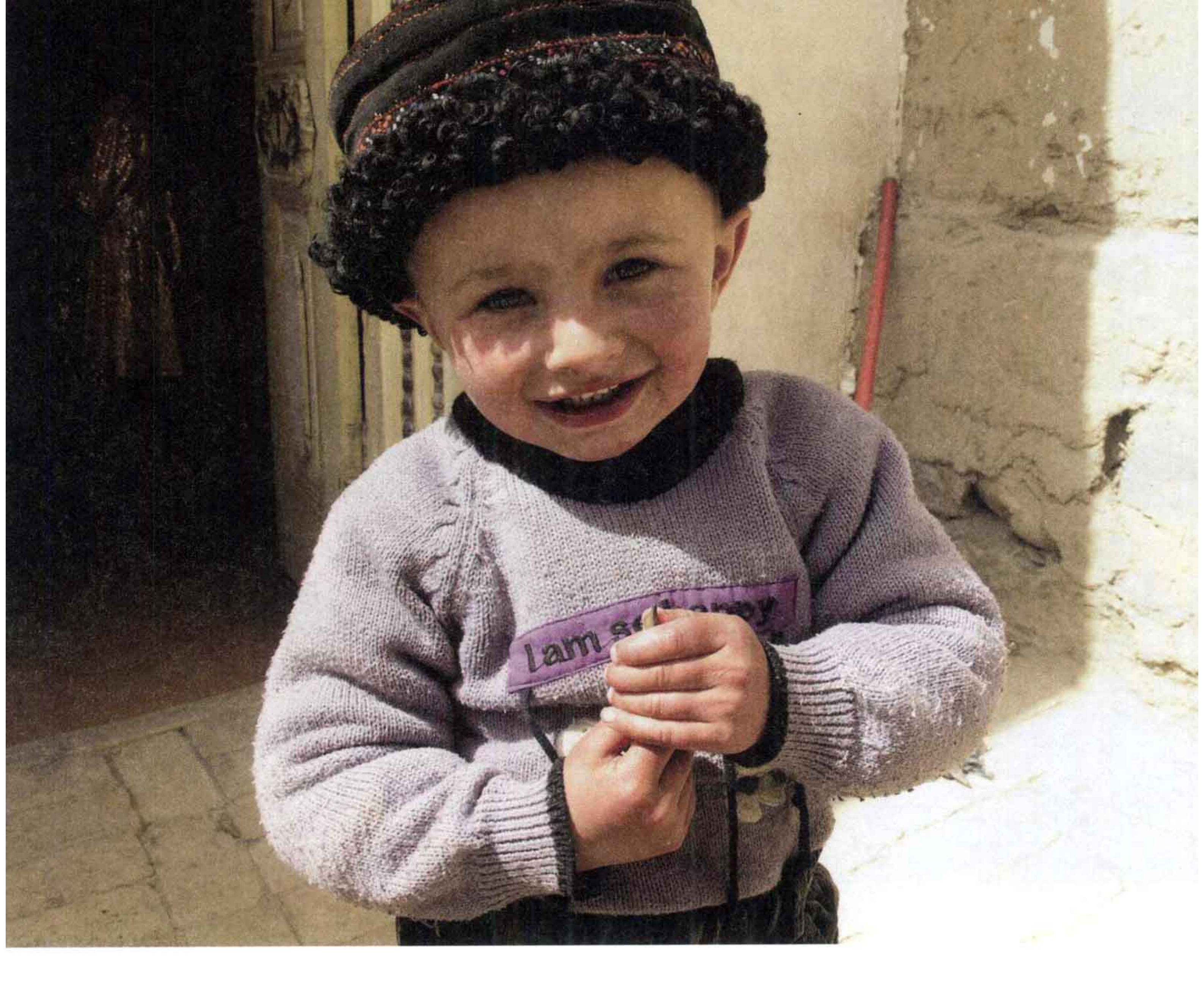
You should formulate laws of justice to protect your subjects and ensure their well-being

To win the beauty's heart, I have to work very hard to earn money like all the poor people

Beauty, your eyebrow is like the crescent moon, and I am so smitten with you that I dare not look you in the face, glowing like sun.

Every time when I pay tribute to your curvy figure, tender lips

9. "Taizi", the title of one complete section of music in Congnaghman with long text and slow rhythm. It means "torture", "distressing".



and lustrous hair

I couldn't help but feel immensely sentimental and melancholy

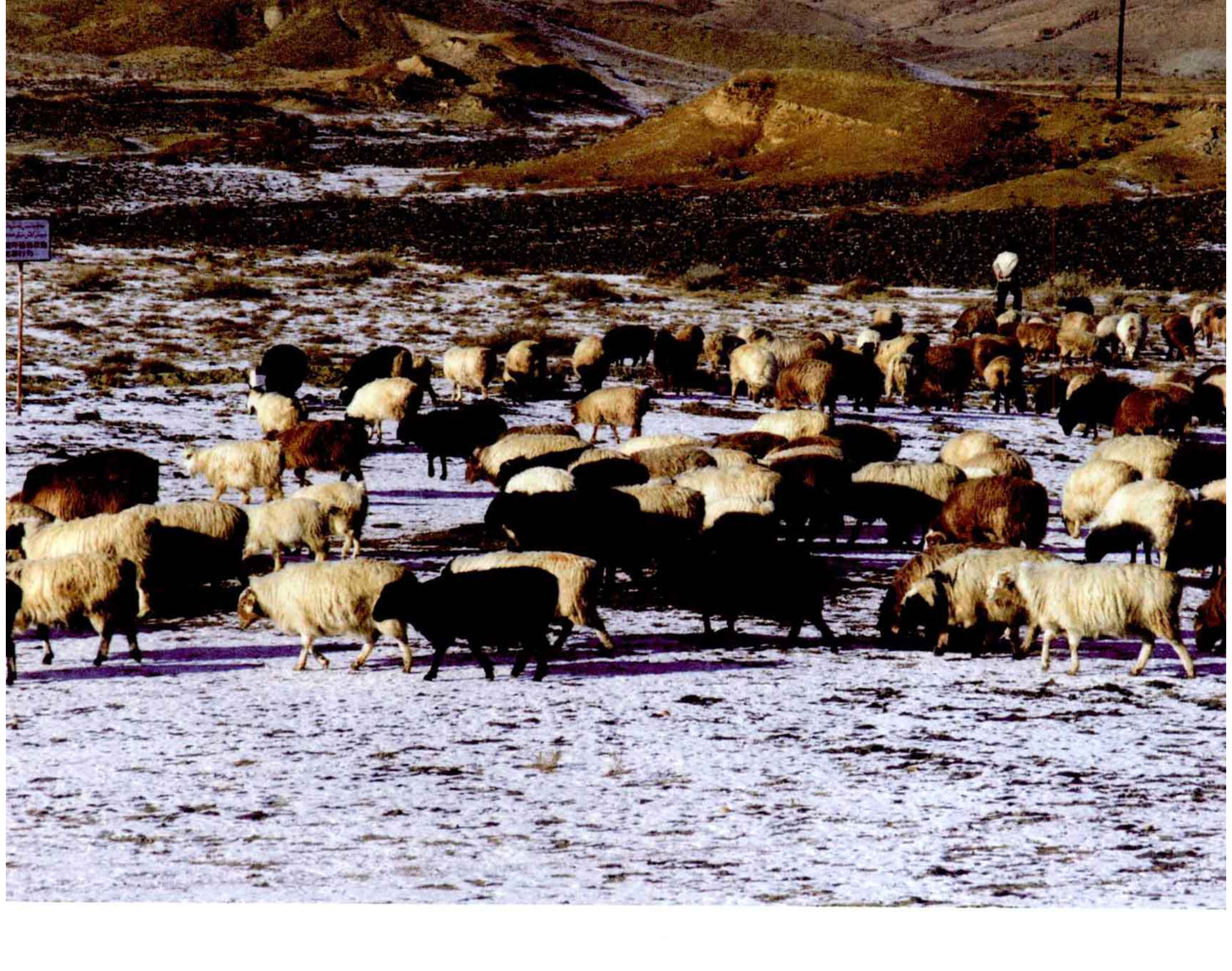
Just as Saint Iysa[10] *could bring the dead back to life*

The beauty could bring peace and health to Ayaz

—Ayaz

Smiling kid, photo by Han Ziyong

10. Iysa, a character in Koran, one of the six messengers of Allah. Legend has it that he is the son of Goddess Maryam. It is said that the Iysa saints could bring the dead back to life. In classic literary works, lover's lips are compared to Messiah, which can also revive the dead. They are also called Messiah in Koran.



Taizi, Cheer up

Please cheer up, energy has been injected into your body

Please be happy, eternal vigor has been bestowed to you

The fairy has returned, making me wild with joy, dispel my sorrow and revitalize my life

Please be wise, patient and stop bragging as my lover has

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photo by Han Ziyong

come back

When we departed, my heart went away with her

And now my heart comes all the way back, so is cold-blooded she

This queen has arrival in secret without my knowing

But why doesn't she show up as if she is a fairy

Alas, my sorrow and grief is determined by fate and my life spared by Azrael

The beauty is going to come back to my life again

Musician, please tune up your instrument and perform, Nawai please sing your heart out

Saki (bartender), you will be punished to drink nine bottle if one drop is left, as the ruler of my life has arrived.

—Nawai[11]

Taizi the Rising Sun on the Mountaintop

Early in dawn, the sun climbs to the top of the mountain

Its brilliant rays make a beautiful picture on the horizon

Like a feather-made broom cleaning the Ka'ba[12]

The scribes of Ka'ba chant Zikr for Allah

Brahman unveils the essence of Buddhism text in the temple

When the woman pilgrim combed her ambergris-scented hair

11. Nawai's poem collection: *Four Poem Collections—The Aged Should Have a Say*, referring to *Uyghur Twelve Muqams* edited by Twelve Muqams Research Association of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Uyghur Classical Literature Research Association, published by Encyclopedia of China Publishing House, 1997, P.94.

And the religious leader walked from Ka'ba to look after Buddhist temples
The musicians played Arganun (a musical instrument which has been lost to the world), sometimes loud and strong, sometimes fine and smooth
The story behind the music could only be appreciated by experts
Who is going to take scraps from the stove in the alley
Like Fardun and Sulayman enjoying their banquet in the palace
Merrymakers finally realize the fickle finger of life
Pouring wine into their cups one after another
My friend, the ignorant people of our times wield the sword toward misery to hack warriors as brave as lions
The result is they themselves are beaten

Taizi Epilogue

Nawai has held a dominant position in the fields of poetry for years
So is the impoverished Ershi, exploring treasure in the kingdom of language

—Ershi[13]

12. Ka'ba means a cubic house. It is called "house of heaven" in Chinese Islam. It refers to a square stone hall in the "holy mosque" in Mecca built with gray rocks from the hill near Mecca. The four corners of the hall are called "Corner of Iraq", "Corner of Syria", "Corner of Yemen", and "Corner of Black Stone" (for its proximity to the "black stone"). The hall gate is in the northeast corner, two meters above the ground. The floor is paved with marbles, with three wooden pillars supporting the roof. The stone hall is covered by the black silk curtain with embroidered golden lines of Koran scriptures. As the Islamic legend goes, this hall is built by Adam according to the prototype in heaven, and rebuilt by Ibrahim and his son Ismail after it was devastated by flood.



These poems, forceful and full of passion, make a perfect match with the music of Congnaghman. This stands in sharp contrast with Dolan Muqams and Hami Muqams using folksongs and ballads as lyrics.

From this, we can conclude that composition of Twelve Muqams results from the concerted efforts of special musicians and scholars based on the creation of the poets. But the original lyrics of Congnaghman before they took shape remain an eternal mystery. All classic art and literature share a similar storyline, i.e., first they

Photo by Keyim · Kadir

13. See also *Uyghur Twelve Muqams* edited by Twelve Muqams Research Association of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Uyghur Classical Literature Research Association, Encyclopedia of China Publishing House, 1997, P.95.

originate among the ordinary people but later become caviar to them. The lyrics of Congnaghman are mostly Gazal, a kind of classical poem originating in Persia and Arab which is different from the traditional literature genre of ancient folk songs in Tujue (Turk). "With the introduction of Islam into Xinjiang, the Arabic and Persian words gradually found their way into Xinjiang literary works, and their proportion in them even accounted for 80% to 90% in late Chagatai period (14th century) as intricate and obscure written language opposite to the oral one."[14] As the language structure of Turkic is incompatible with Arabic poet writing, a large number of Persian and Arabic words and phrases have to be used in the lyrics of Muqam art,[15] leading to a staggering surge in loan words from other language in Muqam art. Even at that time, Gazal with many Arabic and Persian words is quite different from the spoken language of common Uyghur people. With the change in Uyghur language, the ancient Chagatai language with many loan words is hard to understand for the Uyghur people today, which affected the inheritance of this classic musical heritage.

Congnaghman is composed of independent chapters which at the same time are interrelated.

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14. Wang Qian, Liu Guofang etc.: *Uyghur—History and Today*, Xinjiang University Press, 2005, P. 13.

15. Zhou Qingbao: *Musical Culture of the Silk Road*, Xinjiang People's Publishing House, Urumqi, 1987, P. 265.



Each of these chapters starts with a graceful free-meter prelude known as Mugedime,[16] which determines the tune of the whole Muqam performance as the base and stem of all the melody.[17] Accompanied by music, muqamqi began to sing Gazal with his booming voice without vocal accompaniment or tambourine beating. The free-meter prelude at this moment reminds you of the quiet desert and oasis or splendid silk.

Photo by Zhao Qin

16. Mugedime, the first section of Congnaghman in each of "Twelve Muqams", meaning prelude or preface.
17. Tumur Dawamet: Preface to *Uyghur Twelve Muqams*.

After the prelude, artists begin to beat tambourine, and sang Taizi in chorus, with its tune changing from Nus'ha,[18] through brisk big Selike,[19] Jula,[20] Sanam,[21] small Selike and finally into climax. It is followed by Panxilu[22] and Takete[23] which is the transition part from congnaghman to dastan.

The tunes of Congnaghman are mostly cantilena, and can also be found in Dastan. Dastan is a continuation of Congnaghman, but focuses more on narration. Congnaghman is independent from Xiyu Daqu as a comprehensive and complete set, making a large-scale musical heritage with all necessary elements and grandeur. Congnaghman is genesis to Muqam, introducing to us an era full of music about legends and fables.

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18. Nus'ha, one section of music in Congnaghman as a variation from the previous part, taking up a big proportion. It means "the original", or "sample", "pattern".

19. Selike, one section of music in Congnaghman. It means "interesting", "joyous" or "cheerful music" and its lyrics are mostly ballads and poems.

20. Jula, one section of music in Congnaghman. It literally means "flashing" or "glowing", and here it means "happy". It is always performed at wedding ceremony.



Dastan

If we compare Congnaghman to a lonely trip or a monologue under heaven, then Dastan is overflow with narration. The interesting story and stirring emotion in it are as exciting as steep hillsides. As the tempo accelerates, questions, information, concerns are added in the singing, as if a lonely traveler has found a company on his journey.

Dastan means ballad in Uyghur language. It is a loan word from Persian, meaning tale, myth or music. "Dastan originally refers to the tone and chord of musical instruments, but later includes all

Auspicious clouds, painted by Chen Hao

21. Senam, one section of music in Congnaghman. It means "beauty", or "idol", referring to cheerful music to accompany dancing. It is also the heroine in Uyghur folk epic *Harip and Senam*, i.e. daughter of King Abbas, lover of Harip.

22. Panxilu, one section of music in Congnaghman, pantun of ancient songs.

23. Takete, one section of music in Congnaghman. It means "continuation" or "emphasis".



the tales played over the musical instruments." Dastan is popular in the folk literature of various Tujue (Turkic) ethnic groups such as Uyghur, Uzbekistan, Turkey and Azerbaijan. A large number of folk ballads—Dastans—is spreading among the minority ethnic groups in Xinjiang, which add up to over 800 pieces, and Kazakhstan boasts the largest number according to initial statistics, making it the "hometown of ballads." As a musical genre in Muqam, Dastan indicates the suite of ballads, with its lyrics

Dastan performance,
photo by Liang Li

from folk epic.

As the second section of Muqam, Dastan is preserved in ten Muqams except Iraq Muqam and Segah, and most of them are composed by three or four Dastans, namely the first Dastan, the second Dastan, the third Dastan, the fourth Dastan... Between these are intermezzos, most of which are improvisations by the folk musicians as a variation of the previous aria but with no lyrics. Dastan covers a variety of themes, touching upon heroic deeds, humanitarianism, love stories, exposes the cruel feudal system, describes the historical environment for tragic love story and conveys strong emotions.

Dastan is like poetry written for the local people, played on the oasis and fields, with its tune and lyrics true to their life. The lyrics of Dastan is mostly folk love epic, most of which are tragic love stories—the longing for the lover is as torturing as burning flame, and the wheel of fortune making the pain in love all the more acute—if the emotion of an ethnic group can be measured by thermometer, we can feel its intense heat.

In 1950s, the lyrics of Dastan collected from some Muqam artists were only episodes from two long poems. In 1995, Xinjiang Muqam Research Association and Uyghur Classical Literature

Research Association invited 47 experts to formulate 11 academic principles to guide the compiling and checking work of Dastan lyrics for the third time, and collect more of Uyghur folk epics.
There are 13 folk epics selected into Dastan including *Harip and Sanam, prince Nizamidin and princess Rena, Gulxah and Walaike,* among which, *Harip and Sanam* is the longest and most influential one. These folk epics are mostly quatrains, which is the tradition of ancient Uyghur folk songs.
Among these folk epics, the most touching ones are those related to love story. Too many of those stories leave us an impression that Muqam is a musical heritage focusing on love.
Below is the Dastan section of Chebiyat Muqam—lyrics of the first Dastan and the second Dastan:

The first Dastan: I am overwhelmed by grief

I am overwhelmed by grief
My sorrow was steeped into bitter soup
I told my story to every person in hope that they might show me sympathy and help
Only by suffering all privations could I enter into your garden
As a gardener, I did not taste the apple nor pomegranate



I am so happy that Allah brings you to me and let me see you again

I jumped into the river to evade disasters

But troubles shadowed me all the time

Dolan drum dancing,
painted by Yalikun Hazi

Oh my love, you should see what this idiot is like

It is Allah who has brought us together

You are the true lover of Sanawbar

I'd rather die for you

To sum up what I have written

—to whom will those faithless people pledge their loyalty

—Sanawbar

The second Dastan:

Hiding beneath the long hair is your brilliant face

The sight of the beauty spot beside your lips make my heart beat wildly

Like a caged bird dying to fly out of the cage

Oh beauty, your look is like classic works

It will be difficult to clarify them even my whole life is taken

The whole world is set on fire by your glances alone

I, too, am sent into panic after being hit by your glances at night

When asked what love is

You told me the answer gently as if the saint injected in me miracle power

How weird is the gardener, drinking wine early in the morning



Engrossed in music

beside flowers

His heart of nightingale is tortured

The poet is immersed in the world of vocabulary

Selecting the most beautiful words and lines to compose his poems

The banquet could also be held in the evening

Saki could pour wine into your glass in the clear and bright night

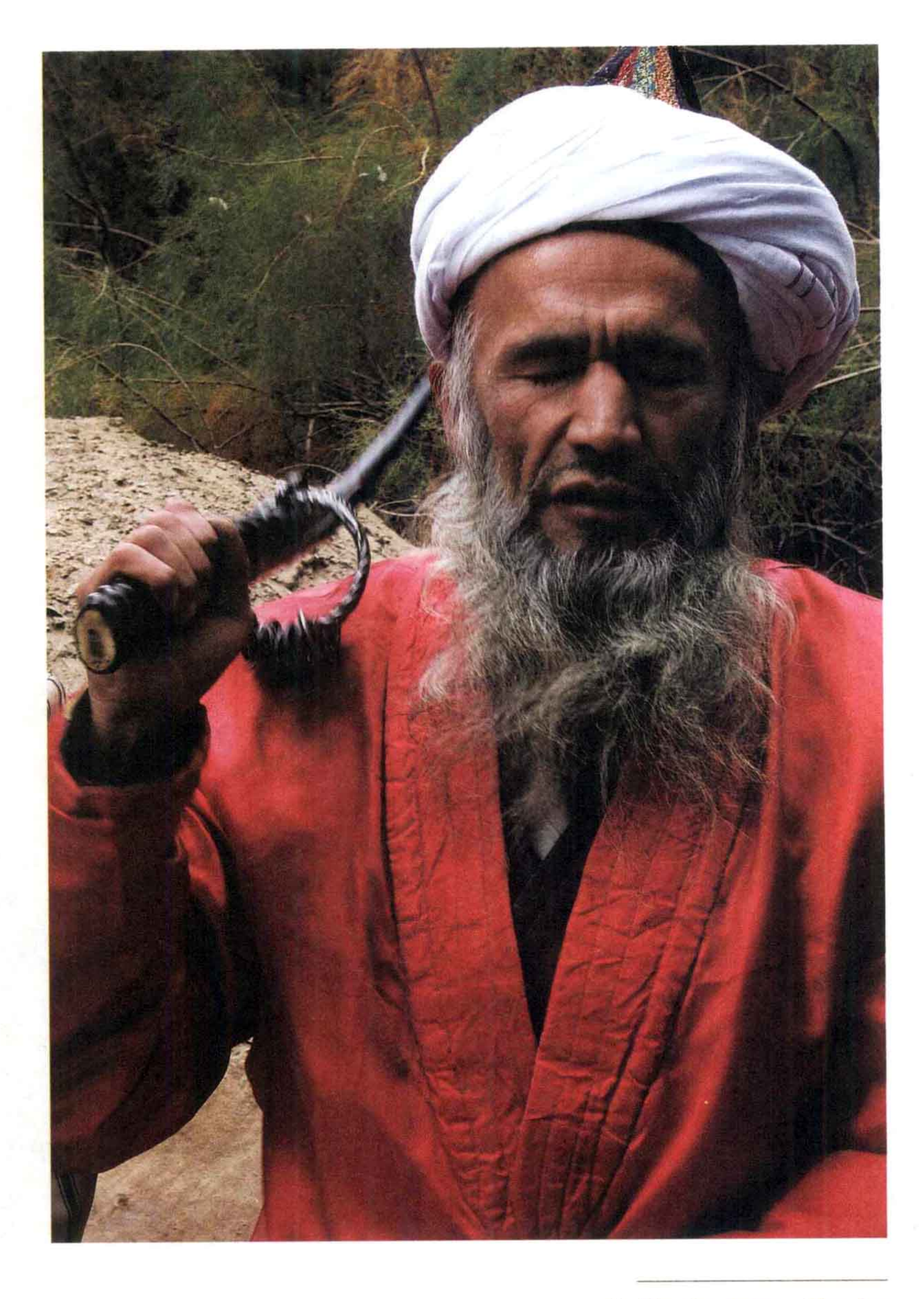
Though the unreasonable put Jilil behind the bars

The splendor of truth can never be blocked

—Jilil

In some sense, Uyghur people are good at composing poetry and music, and keep a good reserve of them while their narrative works are small in number. For example, they began to have novels and prose writings after 1949. Muqams, particularly "Twelve Muqams" are an epic of music and poetry; Dastan, with many narrative folk songs, serves well to communicate emotions.

With the influence of Islamic and Arabic culture, Xiyu Daqu was gradually replaced by Muqam. Two systematic classifications were carried out during this period. One took place in 16th century. The



Peddler, photo by Dang Chenghua



Photo by Liang Li



court of Yarkant kingdom began to collect and sort out Muqams scattered in different regions, standardizing the musical structure of Congnaghman and replacing the folk lyrics with poems popular among the elites. The other happened in 1879—the folk artists in Kashgar and Shache, Alim Salim and Setiwal integrate Dastan and Mashrep into Congnaghman, making the traditional Daqu richer and more expressive, and evolving into today's Twelve Muqams.

In the rural area in southern Xinjiang, Dastanqi (meaning "a specialist in Dastan") either alone or in groups, will play aijieke and rewapu and sings folk epics in orchards, village alleys or at fields. The exciting music infects everyone present, reverberating on the peaceful oasis.

Mashrep

Mashrep is the song of joy and carnival. It features passionate music, swirling dancers, beautiful songs, and charming atmosphere. After going through heart-breaking love and tortuous life, will the heavy-loaded life erupt with a full force?

Mashrep, originating from Arabic, means party or venue, and refers to the gathering for entertainment among Uyghur people.[24] Mashrep in the Twelve Muqams is mostly composed of two or seven pieces of short, brisk, warm and free-metered songs and music.

Some of the musical suites in Mashrep are performed in the form of Senam. These Senams, for example, Kashgar Senam, Ili Senam and Kumul Senam, have strong local flavors. After improving the folk Senam, the artists make it the performance on the stage. In the repertoire of Xinjiang song and dance troupe, Senams of local flavors will be put on stage as the opening or closing show; the warm atmosphere, spectacular scene and beautiful dancing make a grand finale.

In the application of the Art of Chinese Uyghur Muqam to UNESCO,

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24. Zhou Ji: *Muqam*, Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 2005, P. 50.



Drummer, photo by Zhao Junan



Mashrep is described as the "carnival" on the oasis. Muqam is performed in various situations—in restaurants, houses, orchards, or at squares and theatres. Likewise, Mashrep is performed in those places too, except theaters. Of course, in performing

Desert dancing girls,
painted by Yalikun Hazi

Mashrep, the artists can choose the ordinary folk music and dance instead of those typical forms in Muqam to perform, and they can also pick up the most popular sections of Muqam to perform. For Muqam, Mashrep is its most performed part among the people.

Mashrep is the song of joy and carnival on the oasis, and the lifestyle and cultural tradition of the local people.

Mashrep is held either at traditional festivals like Corban Festival or Nowruz Festival or on special occasions, for example, Mashrep for young crops, Mashrep for newly-brewed wine, Mashrep for harvest, or at special moments in life or for special purposes, for example, Mashrep for happy events in life or in need of apology, invitation and reconciliation. In some villages, to prevent one from participating in Mashrep is a severe punishment for him until he corrected his mistake and satisfied everyone.

The songs of Mashrep are mostly short folk songs and ballads, with the tempo fitting well with dancing, which becomes cheerful when the drumbeat fastens. As the climax of this musical heritage, Mashrep integrates perfectly with other sections of Muqam.

Mashrep is the festival on the oasis, refreshing us by bringing endless joy and releasing our pressure and fatigue from daily life. Mashrep fully reflects the optimistic and humorous nature of

Uyghur people.

Below is the lyrics in the second Mashrep of the tenth set of Muqam—Nawa Muqam

The second Mashrep

If we put a coin into water

It can never float

If we break a heart

It can never recover even gold is spent

We thought the horse is in the stable

Yet it was running to the valley

I have six sisters

But one is missing

Soft wind can separate barley and wheat from weeds

But the bond between sisters could only be severed by death.

—Ballad

Mashrep is probably originating from a ceremony in Orkhon during Uyghur Khanate. The gathering of the nomadic people on the plains has special social and cultural functions. The constantly migrating herdsmen put their sacrifice to ancestors and gods, inheritance of tradition, exchange of goods, entertainment,

political alliance, war mobilization and celebration of victory all into their grand ceremony on the plain, which has lasted to the present day.

The Uyghur people, in its westward movement, settled down on the oasis, with the nomadic culture assimilating into the farming culture. Is the popularization of Mashrep influenced by the traditions in early history? Particularly when Mashrep is held at the square in front of the mosque of Kashgar at Corban Festival, tens of thousands of people perform Shaman Dance. Their neat and repeated dance movements impose a tension amidst the solemn atmosphere, striking a balance between abstinence and indulgence, jubilancy and suppression. The grand performance reminds us of the ancient tradition and heritage.



Chapter III
Dolan Muqams

Professional musicians cannot sing it,
Graduates from music conservatories are just
as incompetent;
It was deemed inappropriate for big halls and
magnificent houses,
Only the peasants of the Dolan area are
capable of doing it justice. These outstanding
folk artists control the raging-fire of Muqam
like they tame wild horses.

A woman Axike, by Dang Chenghua

Dolan People

Dolan Muqams have unique local characteristics. This type of Muqam takes its name from the Dolan area, which stretches along the banks of the Yarkant and Tarim rivers. It is most popular in the Markit and Bachu counties of the Kashi area, and the Awat County of the Aksu area. It is also influential in places such as Kuqa, Turpan and Hami. The word "Dolan," which has had a number of different translations in Han Chinese throughout history, is a word some Uyghurs living at the banks of the Yarkant and Tarim rivers as well as in Lop Nor called themselves.

Scholars are divided in opinion regarding the origin of the Dolan people.

Burhan Shahidi[25] believes that "Dolan" is an ancient word for "group." The definition that he provided has no roots in historical anthropology. Rather, it is based on the more general premise that culture, art and history make the Dolan a group of people with a unique way of life in a unique region.... The Dolan people have been living in the untamed forests south of the Tarim Desert for centuries. Hunting is an important part of their seemingly

25. Burhan Shahidi, Uyghur, the first governor of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of new China.



primitive and isolated way of life..... Their unique foods, clothing styles, and shelter preferences are indicative of a lifestyle which differs greatly from those of other Uyghur groups. As far as religion goes, it has been only a few hundred years since they accepted Islam. Therefore, their religious consciousness is relatively weak.

photo by Han Ziyong

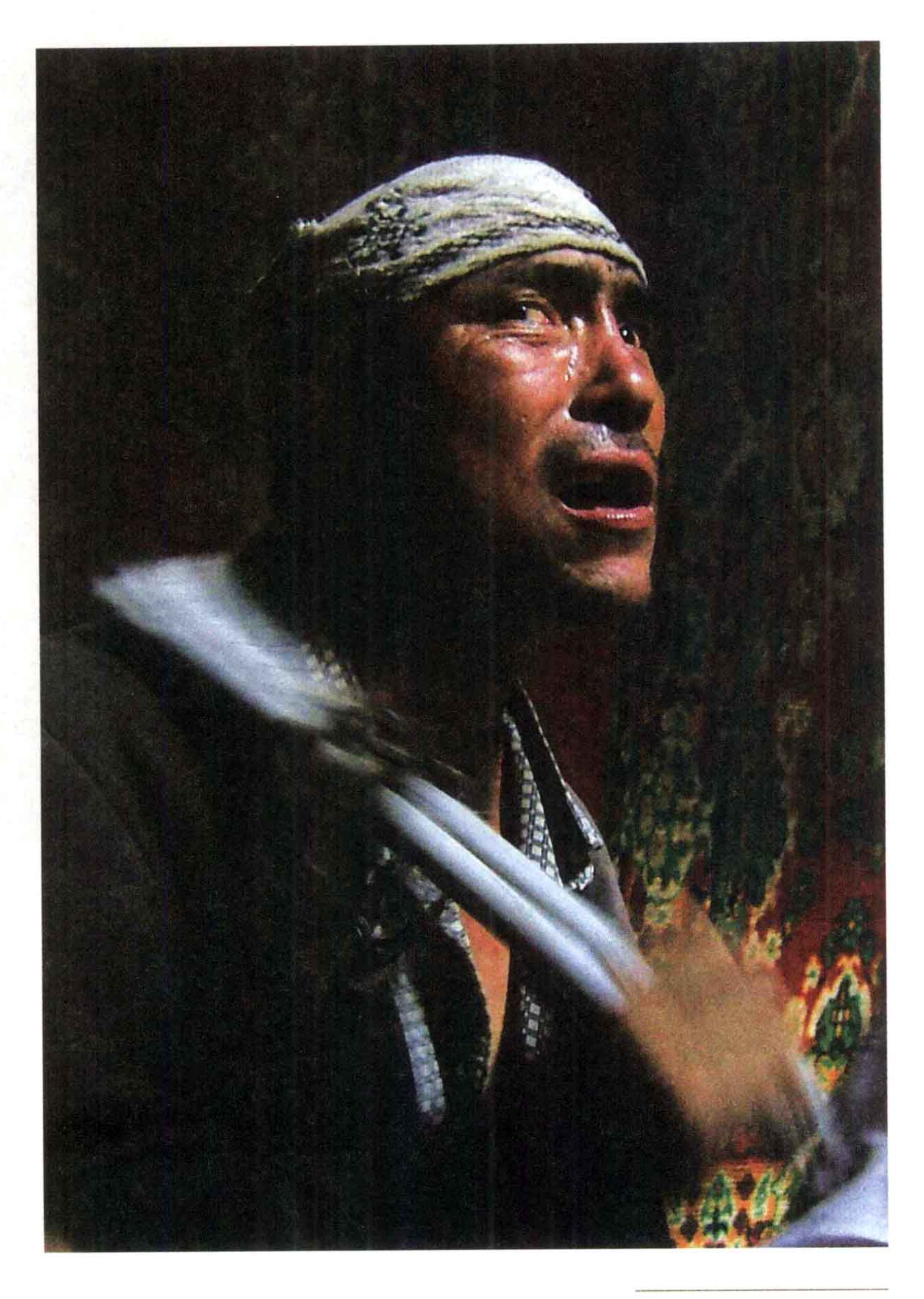
Their clothing style has not changed much over time, and is reminiscent of clothing that ancient Mongolians used to wear. Their language is different from that of other Uyghurs, who actually are unable to understand the Dolan lyrics. The singing and dancing of the Dolan people is also unique. They might be the last branch of people to be integrated into the larger Uyghur group. Their spoken and written languages were gradually lost, along with their religion and original ethnic name, but the name "Dolan people" has been kept.[26]

Some scholars believe that the Dolan people are descendants of aborigines from the Tarim Basin. The entry "Dolan dance" in the Chinese Music Dictionary says that "'Dolan' comes from the Uyghur language, which means 'group' and is the general name of ancient residents living at the border of the Tarim Desert." The explanation in Ci Hai is similar. Some other scholars think that the Dolan people are descendants of the Duolange tribe of the nomadic Gaoche. Members of the Duolange tribe once led nomadic lives in the Xiyu and later migrated south to the oasis of southern Xinjiang and became farmers. After the Uyghurs moved west, they assimilated the Duolange tribe into the group.

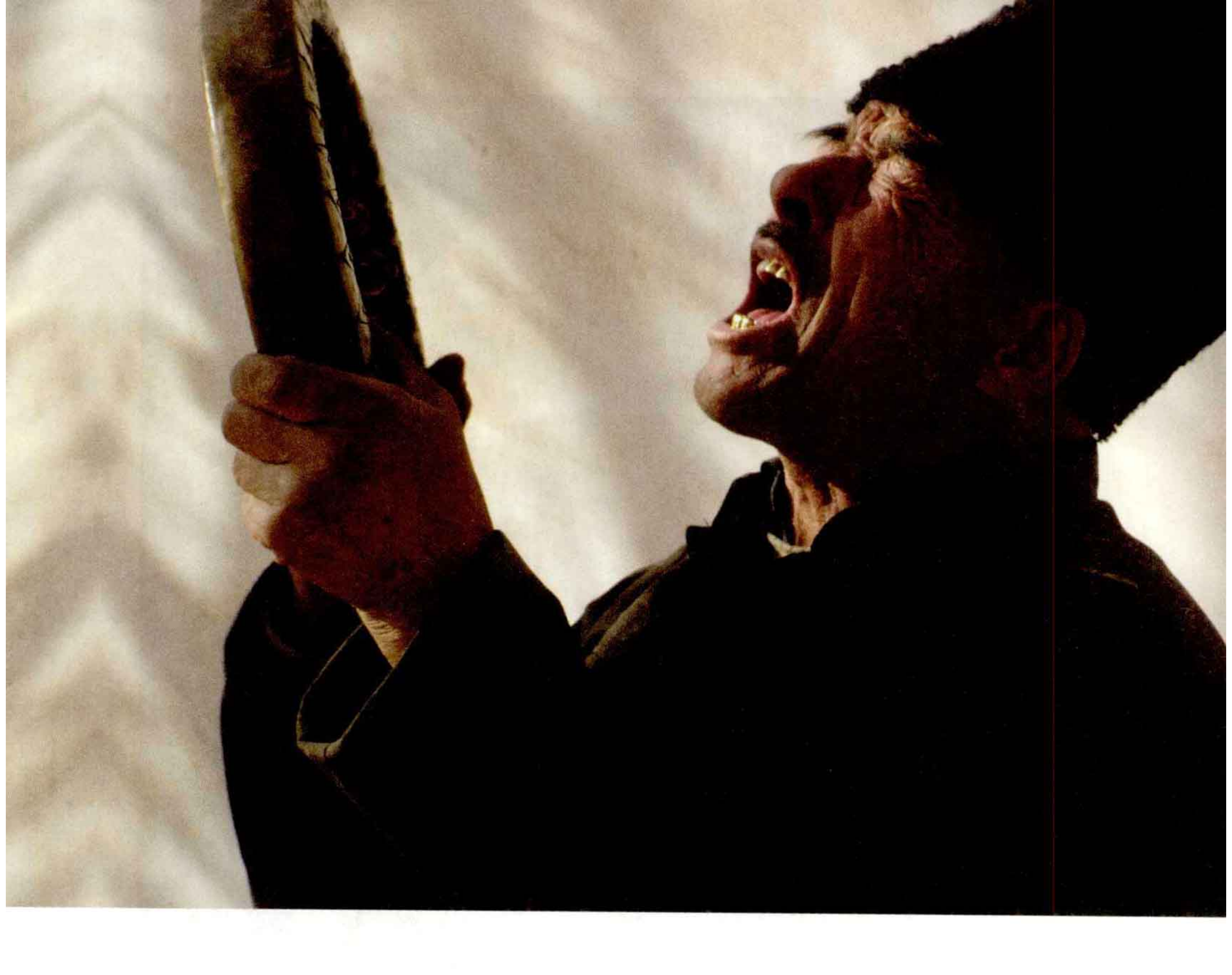
Some other scholars maintain that the Dolan people are des-

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26. Fang Jinji: "Muqam and Ancient Musical Dances" in *Uyghur Muqam Studies* edited by Liu Kuili and Lang Ying. China Minzu University Press, 1997, p. 165.



An Axike beggar, by Dang Chenghua



cendants of the Mongols that branched off by converting to Islam, and were gradually integrated into the Uyghurs. "The Dolan people were mentioned in the letter from Aleksey Nikolayevich Kuropatkin to Nikolai Mikhaylovich Przhevalsky in 1877: 'Nearly 100 households of Dolan people are living around the Malebashenbao who are engaged in farming. After inquiry, I

Yelling, by Zhao Qin

learned that those people migrated from the Junggar Basin to southern Xinjiang more than 100 years ago, so it is reasonable to deduce that they are relatives of the Kalmyks (also Kalmucks)...' We can tell from the information of Kuropatkin that the Dolan people, being relatives of the Mongols or Kalmyks, migrated to southern Xinjiang 150 years ago with 40,000 households.... We once interviewed some elderly Uyghurs in their modern inhabited place—Dadaonan Community, and they admitted that they are the Dolan people and their ancestors were from the Bachu area."

It is of interest to note that Amannisa Khan, queen of Abdurashid Khan of the Yarkant Khanate was born in a poor woodcutter's family in Markit at the Dolan River. She made great contributions to the Twelve Muqams. The Dolan River Basin is the cradle of Uyghur singing and dancing, and Amannisa Khan's father was a famous musician in the region. Under his influence, Amannisa Khan became accomplished in music and literature and was familiar with the playing techniques of various musical instruments. One day, Amannisa Khan met Abdurashid Khan by chance at the Dolan River when he was hunting. It was a crucial moment in Muqam's developmental history. Chief court musician Yusuf Qadr Khan was also born in a similar family in the Dolan

River Basin, and his father was an intimate friend of Amannisa Khan's father. Yusuf Qadr Khan and Amannisa Khan jointly made outstanding contributions to the formation of the modern-form Twelve Muqams.

Most people are under the false impression that Dolan Muqams contain twelve pieces, whereas in reality only nine have been collected to date. Its composition and length differs greatly from the Twelve Muqams. Each of the nine Dolan Muqams is composed of five sections: the mugedime (introductory music), chekteman (tempo), senam (beauty), selike/seliq (interest, will) and sirilma (softness, smoothness). Tunes of the last four sections are very sprightly. It takes more than two hours to perform the nine Dolan Muqams.

Music of Freedom

Everyone who has heard the Dolan Muqams have experienced the soaring and trebling sound scurrying rapidly amidst clouds and then disappearing. It is like a wave, spreading smoothly over the horizon. It can be called the sound of sky, cloud or wind, in the absence of a ceiling, soar to the sky rather than being confined in a room. Even if you don't understand the Uyghur language, you can still imagine the talent it takes for such extemporaneous performance—the musicians and singers sing and shout with an undulating sound as if they are in a contest. They throw their heads back further and further until they cannot go any further.... Every syllable of the lyrics has been made short and unclear, and the content seems unimportant. The cry of life lies in the cry itself, and the singing is already the best content.

Unlike the Twelve Muqams, most suites of the Dolan Muqams have Uyghur names. All the names have the word "Bayawan" in them, which means "Gobi desert and wilderness." Among the Dolan people, the Dolan Muqams were more frequently called "Bayawan" by the local elderly rather than Dolan Muqams, a name

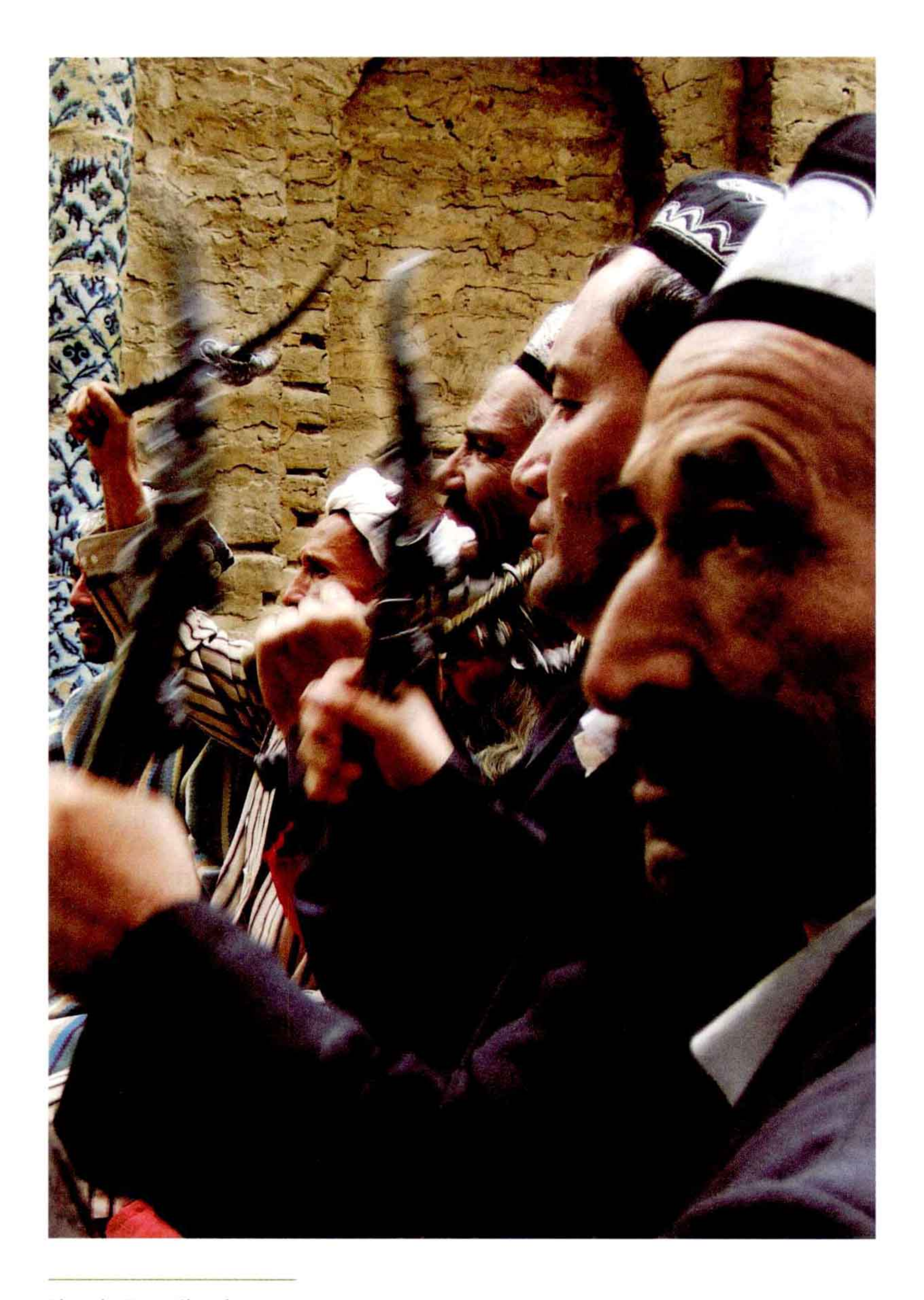


Photo by Dang Chenghua

often used by scholars and cultural departments. "Bayawan' is a general name for the Dolan Muqams.... They don't say 'singing Muqam;' they say 'shouting Bayawan.'"[27]

Among the Xinjiang Uyghur Muqams, the Dolan Muqams are the wildest, roughest and most primitive with the least cultural polish. Though short in length and not so complicated in composition, its immediate audio impact is the strongest. The Uyghur Muqams have become more and more famous in recent years, and thanks to the great attention paid to intangible cultural heritage by society, many experts recommended Muqam to be performed in Hong Kong, Taiwan and other places of China as well as foreign countries. They often choose folk Muqam troupes that only perform the Dolan Muqams. This will inevitably cause misunderstanding in the long run—the outside world may confuse the Uyghur Muqams with the Dolan Muqams, and thus neglect or cold-shoulder the Twelve Muqams. However, we can tell from this that the Dolan Muqams are indeed captivating to its audiences—it must have made the experts hear the shouts and cries of human ancestors from antiquity that have long since disappeared.

The Dolan Muqams or "Bayawan" is outdoor music.

According to research by Mr. Zhou Ji, the cultural significance of

27. Muhammet · Osman: "On the Name Origin and Evolution of Dolan Muqams" in *On Uyghur Twelve Muqams* compiled by Xinjiang Uyghur Muqam Society. Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 1992: p. 223.



the Dolan Muqams is that, first of all, it is the oasis culture of the Tarim Basin, it is the hunting culture of the Turkic groups north of the Gobi; and it is the hunting culture of Mongoloid groups north of the Gobi. Some other scholars, having associated the interpretation of the music and dancing of the Dolan Muqams

Ensemble in the desert,
by Yalikun Hazi

with the hunting process of the Dolan people, regard the Muqam as a complete reflection of the process of finding and stalking prey, calling companions, surrounding, capturing, and celebrating.

"'Dolan Mashrep' has four sections, all of which reflect the joy of returning home successfully after fighting against wild animals. The first section is named 'Chikitme' (meaning tracing). The dancers begin to move their hands and feet to the rhythm of the hand drum. Men stretch their arms and pretend that they are pushing aside tree branches and examining vines while looking for the tracks of wild animals. Women hold one hand behind the back and the other stretched up high, pretending to hold up torches to light the way ahead. Holding the torches with the right and left hands in turn, the women follow the men closely in chasing wild animals. The second section is called 'Sanam' (meaning fighting or having a trial of strength). As the melody changes, the dancers begin to move quickly and nimbly to present the scene that they are drawing bows, shooting arrows or waving wooden sticks and long spears to fight wild animals. They often defend against and attacking the wild animals by walking from the right to the left and from the left to the right. The third section is named 'Senikesti' (meaning killing it). With the change of the rhythm,



the dance form also changes. In this period, wild animals begin to flee in all directions, and the men and women form a ring around the animals to make for a more effective pincer attack against the animals. In the fourth section 'Selime' (meaning hailing the success and happiness), the dance reaches its climax, and the dancers make whirl and twirl as the tempo quickens to show the

photo by Han Ziyong

great joy of the people after a hunting success."[28]

The famed Uyghur scholar Imin Tuerxun noted that "the style and composition of modern Uyghur music can be divided into two general categories: one is desert-forest music, the other is orchard-oasis music. However, the distinction between the two categories is not absolute. Desert-forest music reminds people of the far remote past: the material and spiritual living conditions of our ancestors in the nomadic period. It is an art form suitable for presenting such conditions. Orchard-oasis music mainly embodies the material and spiritual conditions of our ancestors in the settlement period of social development history. The former is mainly in the Dolan modes."[29]

"Bash Bayawan" is the first Dolan Muqam. "Bash" means the first and oldest. There is an impressive line in this Muqam:

The child became a ghost in wilderness,
I saw his figure,
He became a skeleton lying there,
I saw his tomb.

The line implies that in primitive society people were not buried

28. Kadir Hushur: "Dolan Mashrep" in *Silk Road and the Art of Musical Dances* edited by Xinjiang Art Editorial Department. Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 1985, p. 319.

29. Imin Tuerxun: "On the Formation of Twelve Muqams" in *Uyghur Muqam Studies* edited by Liu Kuili and Lang Ying. China Minzu University Press, 1997, p. 50.

after death but thrown into the wilderness.[30] The line is similar to an ancient fable: Some kids played all day long in the wilderness and forgot the way home; the long-lost children became ghosts of the wilderness. When the adults saw the outlines of ghosts, they finally realized that the kids had become skeletons in the wilderness. This must have happened long, long ago!

Beauty is the symbol of freedom, and the Dolan Muqams are the music of freedom.

As if produced by heaven, the Dolan Muqams or "Bayawan" bears the mystery of the wilderness and the strength of the earth, and fully embodies the talent and wild affection of the folks. Its old, unique musical instruments are aesthetically pleasing and provide a tone color suitable for the music. Dolan Ajiek and Dolan Rawap may reveal the polish of the craftsmen, but Qalun, which is more often used despite having weaker trills of metal strings, can reveal itself in an ensemble prominently and harmoniously like pure and bright stream water flowing across the Gobi desert.

The words of the Dolan Muqams, mostly folk songs and ballads similar to *The Book of Songs*, are better than many artificial poems by literati.

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30. Muhammet · Osman: "On the Name Origin and Evolution of Dolan Muqams" in *On Uyghur Twelve Muqams* compiled by Xinjiang Uyghur Muqam Society. Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 1992, p. 225.

"A young married woman is walking,

With a silk handkerchief in the hand;

No strangers can stop her,

For doing whatever one pleases is freedom."

"Your life and mine

Were the same one before,

For your sake, anything of mine

Can be sacrificed.

(refrain)

Hey, young romantic woman, lovely woman,

Where are you going?

Wearing a flower in the evening,

You take my breath away.

"White hare and black hare,

Share a den in the woods.

My lover, please come to see me often,

And I will do so too."

"Like the twig of a white apple tree,

Will you bend for me?

Days wear on like years as I am immersed in one-sided love,

Do you know how depressed I am?

I buried an egg in the stove ashes,

It might have become dry.

My lover is far away in another place,

She might be missing me."[31]

Dolan Rawap is a multi-timbral musical instrument without fixed pitch.... The Muqam that starts from thick strings is called "Bom Bayawan." "Zil Bayawan" begins with thin strings, and "Sim Bayawan starts with iron strings. "Chol Bayawan" was created after the Dolan people moved to the Tarim oasis. When the nomadic Dolan first encountered the diversiform-leaved poplar (Populus euphratica) and Chinese tamarisk (Tamarix ramosissima) in their new territory, they composed the following lyrics:

People say this is the Gobi desert,

But what I see is not Gobi but a fair,

Poplars are like apples,

And tamarisks are tombs.

The Muqam was sung in the Gobi wilderness. All the ballads

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31. Markit County Dolan Muqams Society and Culture Bureau of Markit People's Government. *Uyghur Dolan Muqams*. Xinjiang Fine Arts and Photography Publishing House, 1996.

are very vivid, both practical and inspiring. As it was created in the historical circumstance of Gobi life, it was named "Chol Bayawan."[32]

After the introduction of Islam, the lyrics were amended. For instance, lines like "Oh, my sweetheart, my beauty" which had



Drinking in the Dolan Muqams, by Zhao Qin

32. Muhammet · Osman: "On the Name Origin and Evolution of Dolan Muqams" in *On Uyghur Twelve Muqams* compiled by Xinjiang Uyghur Muqam Society. Xinjiang People's Publishing House, 1992, pp 226

often appeared at the end of each verse were replaced by prayers such as "Wai, Allah! Wai, Allah!"

A white-jade-like apple twig you are,
Please accept me, jade-like girl. Oh, my sweetheart, my sweetheart,
Do you have any idea of
My sorrow and worries, jade-like girl. Oh, my sweetheart, my sweetheart.

The lines were then later modified:

A white-jade-like apple twig you are,
Please accept me, jade-like girl. Wai, Allah! Wai, Allah!!
Do you have any idea of
My sorrow and worries, jade-like girl. Wai, Allah! Wai, Allah!!

From then on, lines like "Wai, Allah! Wai, Allah! Wai, Allah!" became important parts of the Dolan Muqams, which conform to religious requirements while doing no harm to the main content of the lyrics. In this way, the Dolan Muqams can be performed



Qiuci (an ancient state) girls,
by Yalikun Hazi



without any restraint.[33]

Within the great category of Uyghur Muqam, the Dolan Muqams take a little more than two hours, which is not so long. It embodies the strain and upper limit of a high pitch. Professional musicians are unable to sing it; inexperienced students of conservatories are unable to sing it. It was deemed inappropriate for big halls and magnificent houses. Only the peasants of the Dolan area are

Photo by Shen Qiao

33. ditto

worthy of performing—those outstanding folk artists control the raging fire of Muqam like they tame their wild horses. In the folk Dolan Muqams club, several old artists had hernias. A hernia is an occupational disease characterized by swelling in the groin area caused by years of performance of the Dolan Muqams.

If the Dolan Muqams can also be compared to a road, then it is a road of hurricanes and fast-sailing clouds, for it has abandoned unnecessary formalities, polish or transitions. The audience seems to be led up to the sky, hovering freely among the resonant, free, unconstrained notes, and indulging in a blissful giddiness.



Chapter IV
Turpan Muqams

Refine green surplus fat and flesh until all the impurities are ridded and only the essence, symbolizing an unyielding spirit and flying like flame, remains.

Of the three basins of Xinjiang, Turpan Basin is more like a "basin" than the other two: Junggar and Tarim. The Junggar Basin is like a triangle, though it has only two sides; while the Tarim Basin is so large that human beings can only accept it as a basin on maps. Only the Turpan Basin fully embodies the concept of "basin."

A typical route is like this: start from Urumqi; drive along a zigzagged path with a stream on one side and trees on both; descend into the basin from a "wide crevice" on the edge; after passing Xiaocaohu, drive down into the vast, barren Gobi desert.

As the vehicle speeds along, we even become aware of a strange falling sensation. The vehicle shakes, and the driver feels the steering wheel kind of floating. Just like a potato, we roll down into the basin and stop at the very bottom—an oasis at the center of the Turpan Basin.

The Turpan Basin is round.

In this large round basin, there are many smaller round things: Hami melons, watermelons, grapes, nang (a kind of crusty pancake, staple food of the Uyghur and Kazak people), Sugong



Mosque (also called Emin Minaret), cobbles, sand dunes, and the round mouths of the vertical wells of Karez. It seems that the large basin is shaking all the time so that things here of different shapes are polished into numerous small, medium-sized and big "balls;" Turpan seems to have been tempered in a kiln. The mountains surrounding the basin are red, and the stones on the ground are burned into black "potatoes" or even sand. The wind and

Tuyu Valley,
painted by Huang Jianxin

air are both ironed by fire, leaving no vapor. No clouds can float into the sky in the center of the basin. Even its water has to flow underground in Karez.[34]

Refine green surplus fat and flesh until all the impurities are ridded and only the essence, symbolizing an unyielding spirit and flying like flame, remains. The image of fire is even reflected in the fruits of green plants: claret grapes and mulberries, red nang, and roasted lambs.

There is no "neutral" beauty.

No painter treats all colors equally, just like parents with several children usually have a favorite. Equality means no difference; and no difference means no unique character and no detail. Without uniqueness and detail, there will not be a singular and absolute "one" in the artistic world.

Huang Jianxin, a painter from Xinjiang, tries to find materials from Turpan communities. Among his paintings about Turpan, the most impressive is the unyielding green and charcoal flames.

In his paintings, I have found the fire and the green of Turpan: the long-burning, high-melting and incandescent fire of passion, and the wonderful energy of green to maintain such passion. The fire in Huang's paintings does not float upward; its low flames seem

34. Karez is an irrigation system on the Turpan Oasis. On the ground, you can only see well mouths, looking like buttons. Karez, the Great Wall and the Great Canal are three projects made in ancient China and are still in use now.



to have burned a long time but become hotter and hotter, more delicate in color and more gentle in hue. The fire permeates into all the images, even the foot of earthen walls show a yellowish chromatic halo.

And the green in Huang's paintings is of a typical style in this

A Farmer's Courtyard,
Bathed in Golden Sunlight,
painted by Huang Jianxin

oasis of fire. Hot air evaporates, and background objects look transfigured in the mist. In Huang's paintings about Turpan, the white poplars look like green flames standing in courtyards, along walls and on mesas.

The grape trellis in some Uyghur courtyards is a screen, riddling the sunshine, which becomes lights of different shapes through green vines. Such courtyards stand in silence, but look so beautiful in the sunshine and green.

Undoubtedly, Huang Jianxin was the most pivotal to the discovery and expression of the beautiful colors of Turpan. The themes of his paintings revolve around life in Turpan. Through his work, he has established a system for appreciating the beauty of Turpan for himself, and for us, too.

In our world, there are two Turpans: one is the real oasis of fire that attracts numerous tourists with its unique flavor; and the other is found in Huang's paintings, which can be hung on walls or carried around the world. Both present the unyielding green and short charcoal flames of Turpan.

Turpan Muqams collect songs of flames and the green plants of Turpan.



Singing Flames

Turpan Muqams are popular in the Turpan Prefecture, particularly Lukeqin Town in Shanshan County.

Eleven suites of the Turpan Muqams have been collected by now. All the present sound recordings are from singers of the third and fourth generations. The scripts from Lukeqin artists are complete. *Classical Uyghur Music: Turpan Muqams* contains 66 pieces. The book was compiled by the Center for Ethnic and Folk Literature and Art Development of

People are dancing, photo by Shen Qiao



the Ministry of Culture and published in 1999 by Nationalities Publishing House.

Structurally, Turpan Muqams are similar to Congnaghma, the first section of the Twelve Muqams. Each suite of the Turpan Muqams includes eight pieces: the mugedime,[35] cheket, bashcheket, yalancheket, jula, senam, selike, and a finale. The enthusiastic

A muqam performance in Lukeqin, photo by Han Ziyong

35. Also called Gezele, a genre of poetry with strict rules and forms for poetic composition. Originating in Persia and Arab, it is composed of seven couplets, totaling 14 lines. Uyghur Muqam usually uses a classic Gezele as the prelude.

dance Nazirkom is in the section of Senam, which includes many pieces of dancing melodies.

The libretto of the Turpan Muqams is mostly folk ballads and poems from the Middle Ages. The libretto covers the essence of Uyghur oral literature and classical poetry in Chagatai Khan's reign. It is a rare living archive for the research on the philosophy of life, morality, folk traditions, Uyghur Muqam art and performance, and other cultural expressions of ancient Gaochang people and surrounding ethnic groups, and present Uyghur group.

The Turpan Muqams are almost the same as the first section of Congnaghma of the Twelve Muqams; it bears little similarity to the other two sections of the Twelve Muqams, Dastan and Mashrap. In general, the Turpan Muqams are more natural and closely associated with local customs, while the Twelve Muqams are a masterpiece collated and processed by court musicians and scholars. The Twelve Muqams have 13 volumes, while the Turpan Muqams and Hami Muqams have only one volume each.

Here are the lyrics of the first song in the bashcheket section of Dolan Muqams:

Cross over Khenrqi Mountain,[36]

36. A famous mountain in Shanshan County.

And you will see shoals;

My love, as bright as the moon,

Comes from the other side of the shoal.

Her name is Sharihan,

And her eyes look like stars;

Her eyebrows look like bows,

And her hair is as soft as silk.

Her long dress,

Is made of silk.

As long as we are together,

The Gobi Desert is heaven.

Turpan stands on a crossroad on the Silk Road. The stream of people from Hami divides into two, with one group heading south and the other heading northern Xinjiang. For this reason, the Turpan Muqams are more influenced by the Twelve Muqams in structure.

According to a field survey by Zhou Ji from Xinjiang Research Institute of Arts, the Turpan Muqams are performed either by singers accompanied by traditional stringed and woodwind instruments, or only by wind and percussion instruments without



singing. Thus, some famous Muqam performers in Turpan can not only sing while playing the satar (a long-necked bowed lute with one melodic and eight to 12 sympathetic metal strings), but can also play the surnay (suona, a woodwind instrument) without singing. In his book, Zhou Ji wrote, "At a small assembly hall,

Two Lukeqin residents are dancing, photo by Han Ziyong



people sit on colorful carpets along the root of walls. A piece of surnay music serves as the prelude, and the light and melodious music attracts people. Three men beat the nagra (a pair of small iron drums covered with cow or donkey skin, played with a pair of sticks) and one plays the tombak (a bass drum, played with one

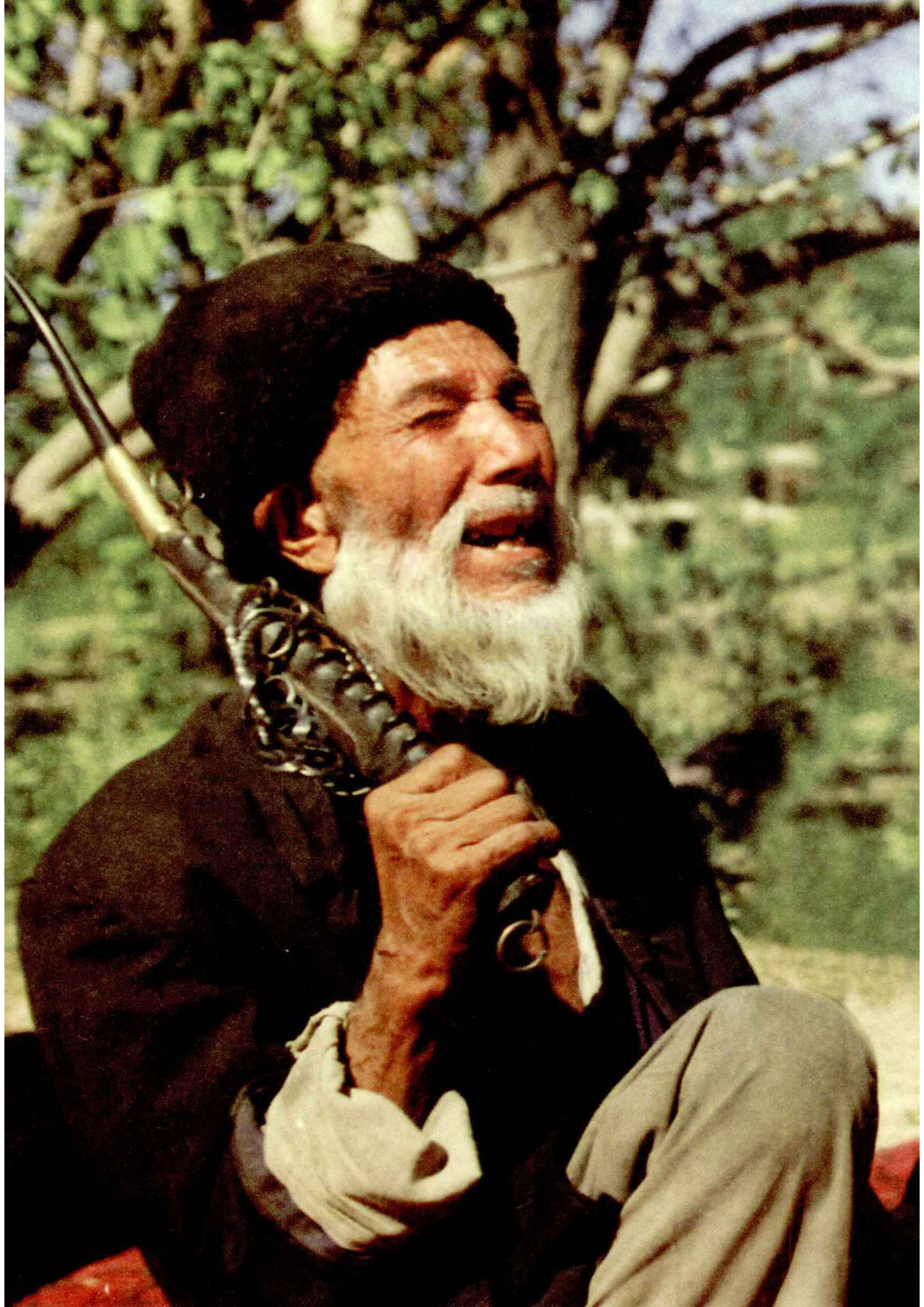
photo by Han Ziyong

stick). Accompanied by the drumbeats, the surnay music goes on. Basic rhythms of the music are played on one nagra, while strong and loud beats come from the other two pairs of nagra. The drumbeats remind us of a record about ancient music and dances in the Western Region. Accompanied by the music, people start to dance and sing together."[37]

Both the Turpan Muqams and Hami Muqams include a suite of Dolan Muqams. The first political and cultural center in the old Western Region was Loulan, which was renamed Shanshan in the Han Dynasty. Some experts believe that after this center disappeared, its residents went to present Shanshan County, Korla City (mainly in Luntai County) and Hami City.

There is a shortcut from Shanshan County to Lop Nur and Loulan. Most adventure lovers and tourists go to Lop Nur from Korla, because in terms of administrative division, both Lop Nur and Korla are under the jurisdiction of Bayangol Mongol Autonomous Prefecture. Whoever needs to go through the formalities will go to relevant administrative departments of Bayangol.

37. Zhou Ji: *Muqams*, published by Zhejiang People's Press in 2005, p.48.



Chapter V
Hami Muqams

Around Xinjiang, only females in Hami could perform Muqam as drummers. Their costumes adopt the Han style, with an opening on the right side of the garment. And the embroidered patterns and colors of their costumes adopt some Mongolian characteristics.

Mah Dor

In the Han Dynasty, Hami was the seat of Huyan regime of the nomadic Xiongnu.

When the nomadic Xiongnu withdrew from the Hexi Corridor, the first place they passed was Hami. And later when other nomadic peoples withdrew to the west, the first oasis they passed was Hami too. After Loulan disappeared, Hami became the first base of Loulou culture in the Western Region (the second was Turpan). In the tenth century, Islamism spread into Kashgar, and based in Kashgar, it spread eastwards; and it was not until the 16th century that it dominated Turpan and Hami. For this reason, Hami is a multicultural place.

The Yizhou Music in old Hami played an influential role on the Central Plains.

The Chronicles of the Jin Dynasty: Monograph on Music records: There was a horizontal musical instrument that can be played by blowing, it was locally known as shuangjiao. Zhang Qian went to the Western Region as envoy and returned to Xijing (present Xi'an) with only one piece of music—Mah Dor. In historical records, Zhang Qian went to the Western Region in 139 BC



A traditional Uyghur gathering to play Mashrep, painted by Abdulkilem Nastin

and met with setbacks and hardships there; only he and one of his attendants returned—they had no time to attend to musical instruments and music. It was possibly after Zhang's second visit to the Western Region with General Wei Qing in 123 BC that he took back Mah Dor. During this expedition, Zhang's knowledge of local customs and landforms helped Wei Qing defeat Xiongnu and Zhang himself thus won a title of marquis. Then Zhang took back Mah Dor and the instrument. I believe that in addition to mastering some skills Zhang took back some performers; otherwise he had no time to learn Mah Dor while busily engaged in warfare. It was possibly from Loulan or Hami that Zhang took back Mah Dor.

This was the first time that Mah Dor appeared in historical records of the Han language. A Japanese scholar Jitsuzo Kuwabara inferred that "Mah Dor" was a transliteration of "Maha-Tokhara" in Sanskrit, "Maha" means "big" while "Tokhara" refers to the name of a country in ancient Central Asia. Therefore "Mah Dor" was named after place name, meaning "Tokhara music." As a matter of fact, "Mah" was a common word among many ethnic groups in the ancient Western Region, meaning "big"; while "Dor" meant "song or music" in the ancient languages of Uyghur and Qirat Mongolia.



"Mah Dor" thus should be interpreted as "a large-scale suite of music" and was called "Daqu"[38] in Chinese.

A Han-Dynasty musician Li Yannian revised Mah Dor into 28 pieces of music. Some experts believe that it was for the influence of Mah Dor that some parts—"Yan," "Qu" and "Luan"—of Xianghe Daqu came into being in the Han Dynasty. "Yan" is a prelude in Sanqu, a type of verse with tonal patterns modeled on

A dance accompanied with stone percussion music, photo by Shen Qiao

38. Guan Yewei: "Formation and Development of Muqam", *The Silk Road and Art of Music and Dance*, compiled by Xinjiang Arts editorial department, published by Xinjiang People's Press in 1985, p.52.

tunes drawn from folk music; "Qu" is in moderato and "Luan" is an allegro at the end.[39] Such a structure is similar to that of Congnaghma.

According to contemporary Chinese musician Guan Yewei: Muqam is an old form of folk art. Its original form was Mah Dor, which was popular in areas from south of Tianshan Mountains to Lop Nur around 200 BC. In the fourth century, the name of muqam appeared in documents of Qiuci (an ancient Western state), and the music spread into the Central Plains inhabited by the Han group. In the sixth and seventh centuries, muqam was improved in terms of its structure, and it became a suite of music of both songs and dances including "Yan" (tune for songs), "Qu" (musical tunes) and "Luan" (tunes for songs and dances).[40] Xiyu Daqu was an early form of Uyghur Muqam.

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39. Zhou Jingbao: *On Muquam*, Ibid., p.78.

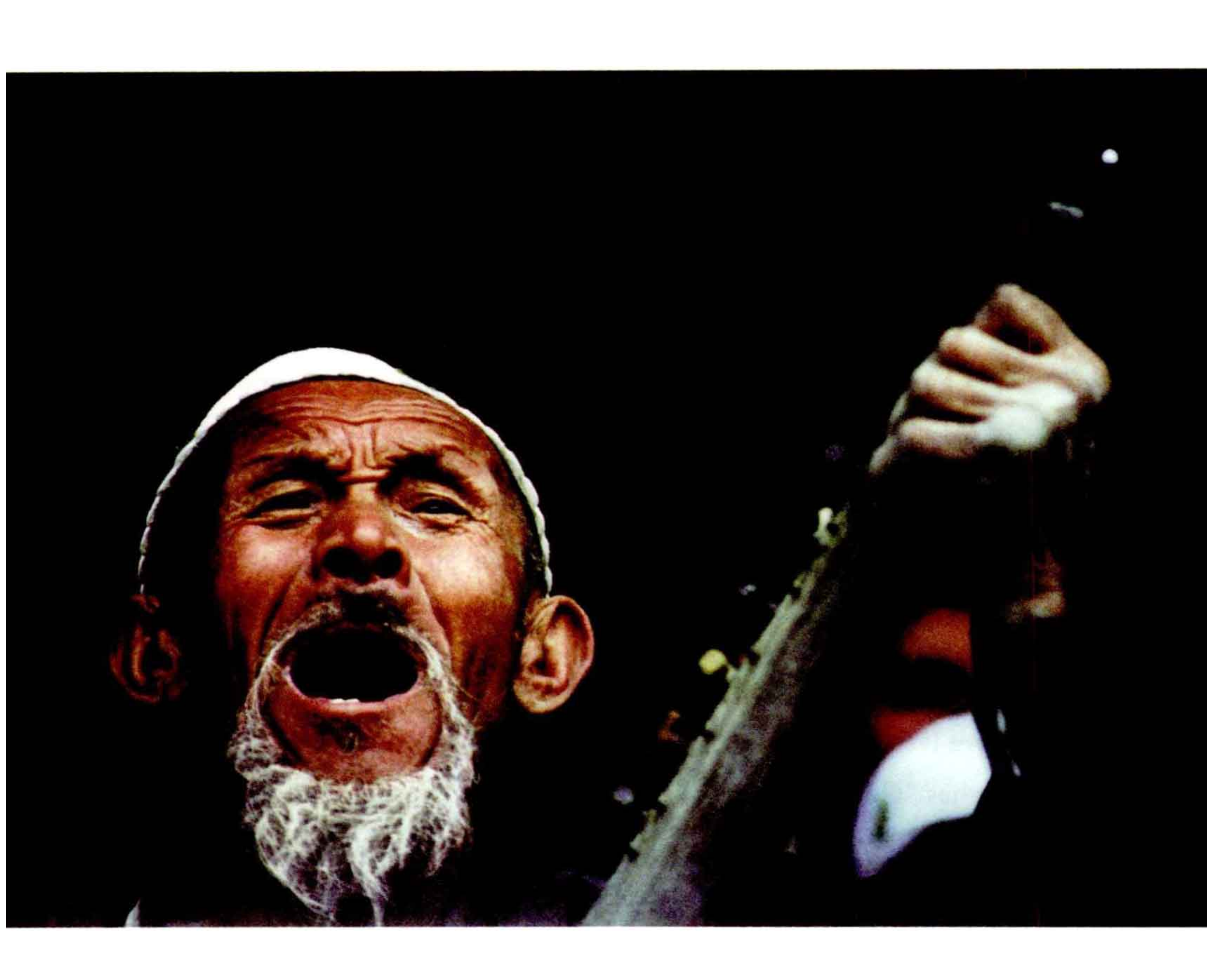
40. Guan Yewei: *Formation and Development of Muqam*, Ibid., p.70.

Uyghur and Han Styles

Hami Muqms (or Kumul Muqams) are popular in Taojiagong County in Hami City and Naomaohu Oasis in Yiwu County.

The book *Classical Uyghur Music: Hami Muqams*, complied by Cultural Department of Hami City and published by People's Music Publishing House in 1994, lists 258 pieces of music in 19 chapters of 12 Muqam suites: Chongdur Muqam (alias "I roam the world"), Oshaqdur Muqam (alias "Hey, hey, Yuelan"), Mustazat Muqam (alias Yalughuz tuyun), Chargah Muqam, Huput Muqam, Chebiyat Muqam (alias Janikaim), Mushawrak Muqam (alias "Good medicine to heal your heart"), Uzhal Muqam (alias Dardilwa), Dur Muqam (alias "You make me suffer"), Mushawrak Muqam, Iraq Muqam (alias "You make me suffer"), and Rak Muqam (alias "Oh sing, my nightingale").

The second suite of Hami Muqms is called Oshaqdur Muqam. In ancient Uyghur language, "Mah Dor" was also called "Oshaqdur," and both meant the same thing: Daqu. This suite is also called "Hey, hey, Yuelan." Yuelan refers to a kind of red flower on the grassland, and it is possibly Lilium pumilum growing on Qilian



Mountains. Most ethnic groups of the ancient Altaic language family believed in Shamanism; when Yuelan bloomed at the end of May, they would hold large ceremonies to offer sacrifices to Heaven when all the people danced in circles. "Hey, hey, Yuelan" served as ornamental words in most lyrics of songs and dances,

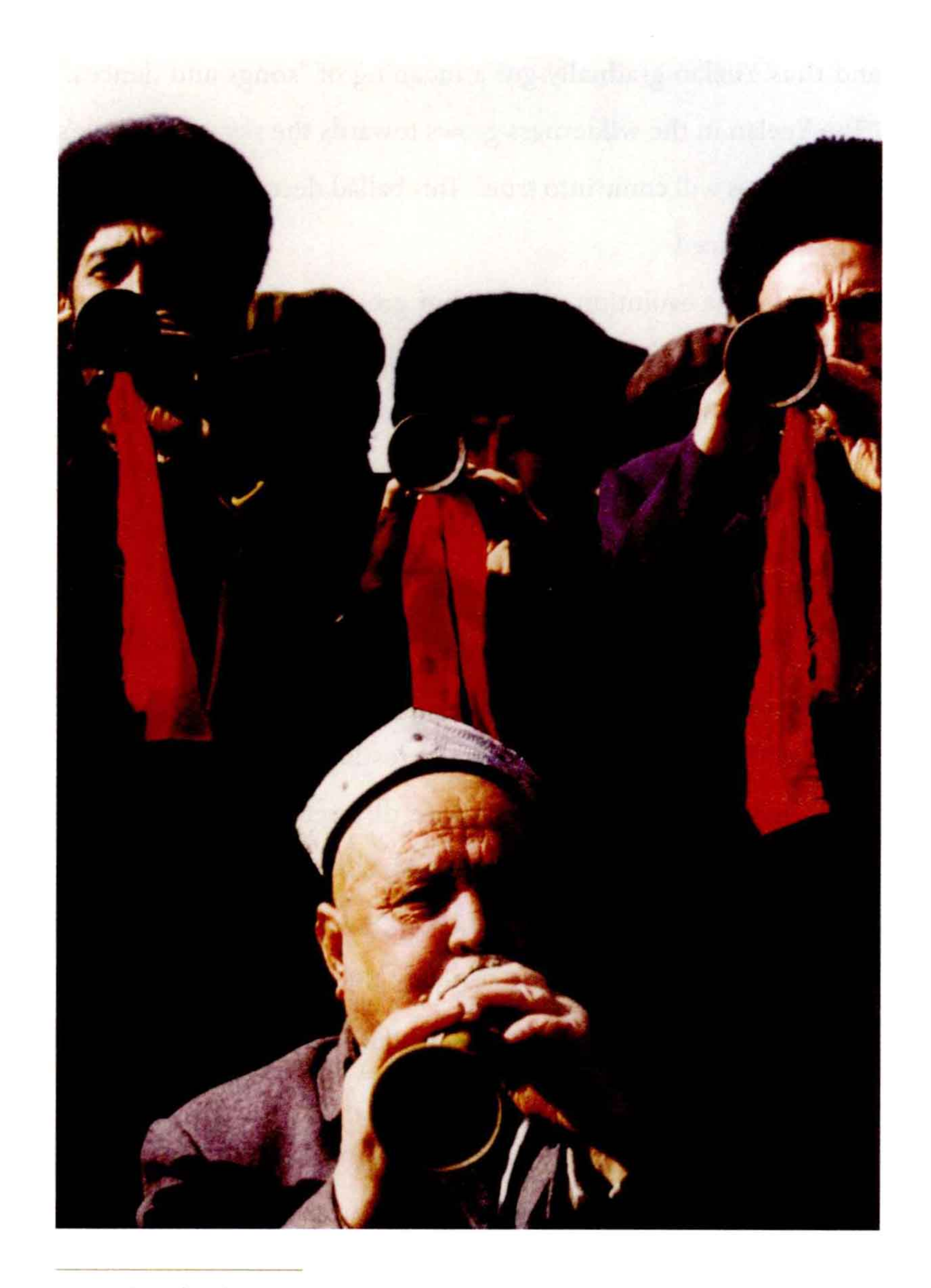
An old man is performing,
photo by Shen Qiao

and thus Yuelan gradually got a meaning of "songs and dances." "The Yuelan in the wilderness grows towards the sky, and people's good wishes will come into true." This ballad describes how people sang and danced.

In terms of its evolution, the Uyghur group used to be one of the tribes of Gaoche. Gaoche, Turk and other nomadic ethnic groups in ancient northern China were all loose tribal alliances, thus a grand gathering of nomadic people on the grassland played a significant role. One of the most important expressions at such a gathering was singing.

As the eastern gate of Xinjiang, Hami was the first place that Uyghur people stayed when moving west and a place which embraced Islamic and Arabic cultures later than other places. Therefore Hami Muqams are quite different from the Twelve Muqams in content, structure and style. One of its most important characteristics is that it is composed of folk songs and music. Each suite of the Hami Muqams starts with a free-meter sung prelude, which is followed by 10 to 21 pieces of music of songs and dances popular with local people.

The free-meter sung prelude makes a major difference in the Uyghur music culture. The free-meter sung prelude in the



A surnay (suona) performance, photo by Wei Kaizhong

Congnaghma is an important factor in Xiyu Dayu, and a critical symbol of Muqam. As for the free-meter sung prelude itself, its impromptu, complexity and difficulty for singing also make a sense. Without it, the Hami Muqams would become a folk suite. In the Hami Muqams, a suite of music of songs and dances follows the prelude; thus the focus shifts onto dancing, delightful and unrestrained dancing.

On the whole, the Hami Muqams only keep the free-meter sung prelude in the Congnaghma, compared with the Twelve Muqams; and the suite of song and dance music is similar to Mashrap, occupying a large proportion in the whole Muqam. Moreover, the Hami Muqams are closer to folk customs than the Twelve Muqams in terms of form, structure and history. Taking the Twelve Muqams as a criterion, Turpan Muqams mainly follow the structure of its Congnaghma while Hami Muqams take the form of Mashrap. The lyrics of the Hami Muqam is also deeply rooted in local life.

Here are the lyrics of *Flea,* the 13th song in the second chapter of Chongdur Muqam, the first suite of the Hami Muqams:

My flea is a brave man,

Sleeping peacefully in my quilt;

I throw him into water,

And he turns up his eyes.

He has two small tufts of moustache,

And his feet are made of gold and jewelry;

I glance at him,

And he immediately pricks up his ears.

I regard him as a camel,

And put a nose ring on him.

I make him carry solid food for a six-month journey,

And I ride on him with my love.

But he is reluctant to walk despite of my urge,

And he does not go when I continue urging on him;

On the ground, he wants to roll,

And in mud, he wants to turn a somersault.

I get angry,

And thus cut out his throat.

He produces 70-jin lean meat,

And 60-jin fat.

I give one jin to some person,

And give one jin to another;



I donate the rest,

And only keep the leather.

I hand over the leather

To a tanner named Asa;

Then I get it back

And give it to a tanner named Mosa.

It takes six months to dress the leather,

And it takes another year to cut it;

Along the Old Course of the Niya River, painted by Wang Yongsheng

Imams use it to make sheaths,

And aunts use it to make needle bags.

Only half a piece of leather remains,

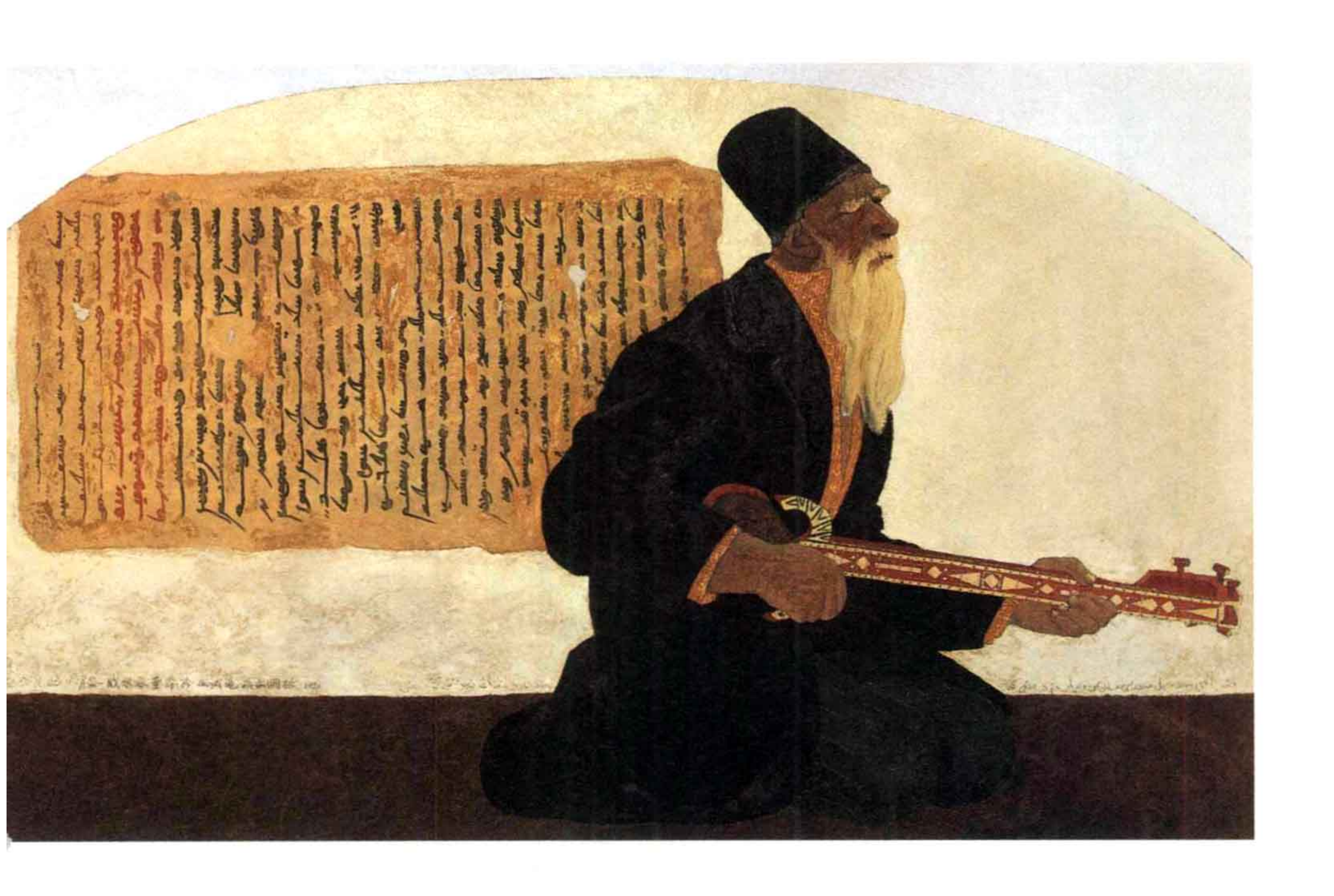
And I give it to a shoemaker.

As a traditional Uyghur song, it is put into the Hami Muqams, showing the inclusiveness of the Hami Muqams.

In the Hami Muqams, the names are mainly taken from the Twelve Muqams and names of local villages and towns, apart from old names such as Dor. In terms of structure, it comprised Sanqu, song music and dance music, and some have characteristics of folk songs in northwest China. Around Xinjiang, only females in Hami could perform Muqam as drummers. Their costumes adopt the Han style, with an opening on the right side of the garment. And the embroidered patterns and colors of their costumes adopt some Mongolian characteristics.

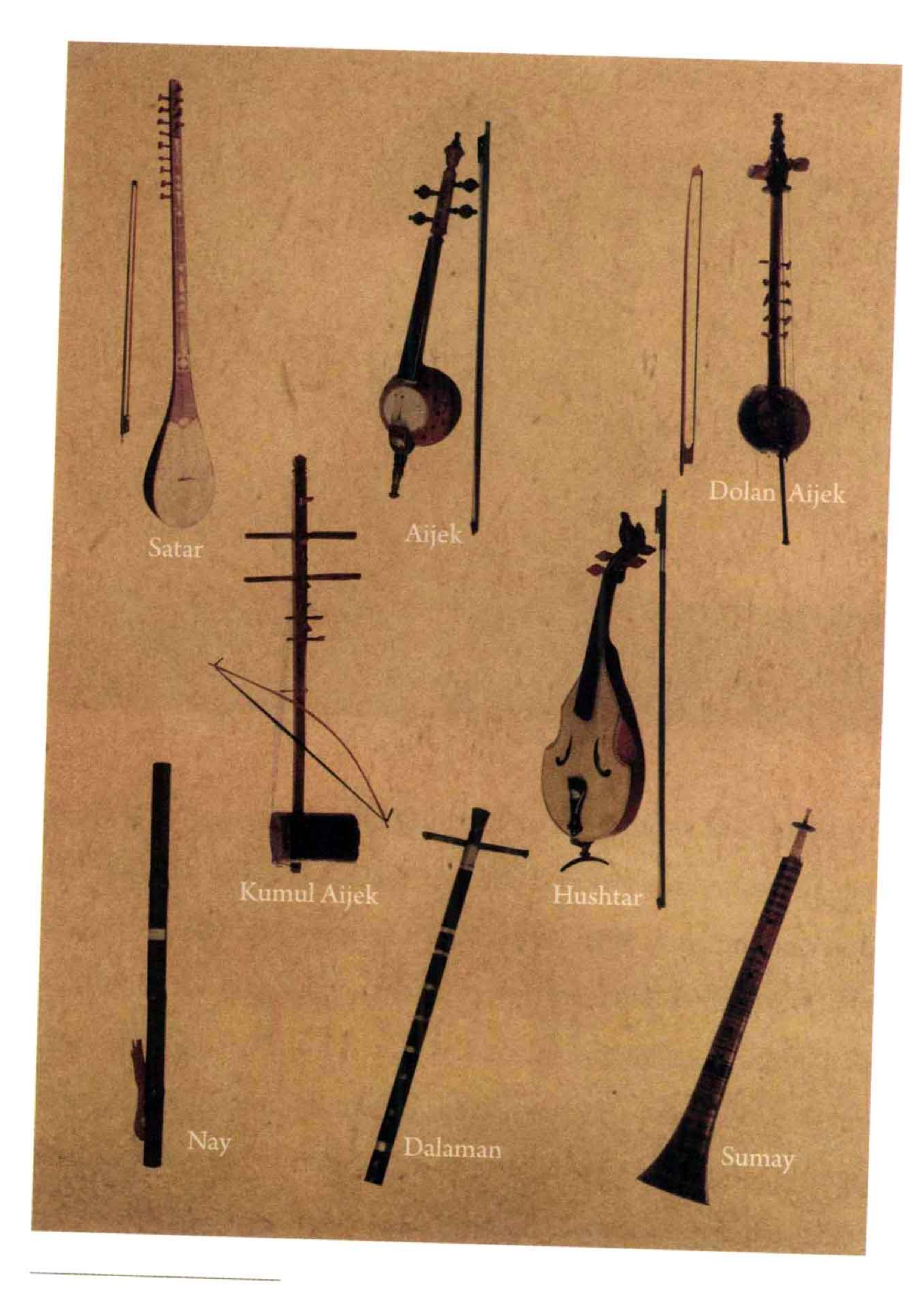
In history books of the Han language, it was important to point out that the opening of a garment was on the left or right side. It was a stubborn tradition.

In remote antiquity when Huaxia (an ancient name for the Han ethnic group) took shape, its people believed that clothing was



an important symbol distinguishing Huaxia from other Qiang (an ancient ethnic group) tribes. At that time, "Hua" was used to describe the gorgeousness of clothing while "Xia" meant "large"; hence the word "Huaxia" meant "to distinguish itself from others in clothing." Although Huaxia originated from Qiang, the group developed self-consciousness later. It then became an agricultural people, settled down on the Central Plains, and developed socialized organizations. Clothing was a visual characteristic of the

Maitrisimit, a Uyghur drama, painted by Xiao Gu

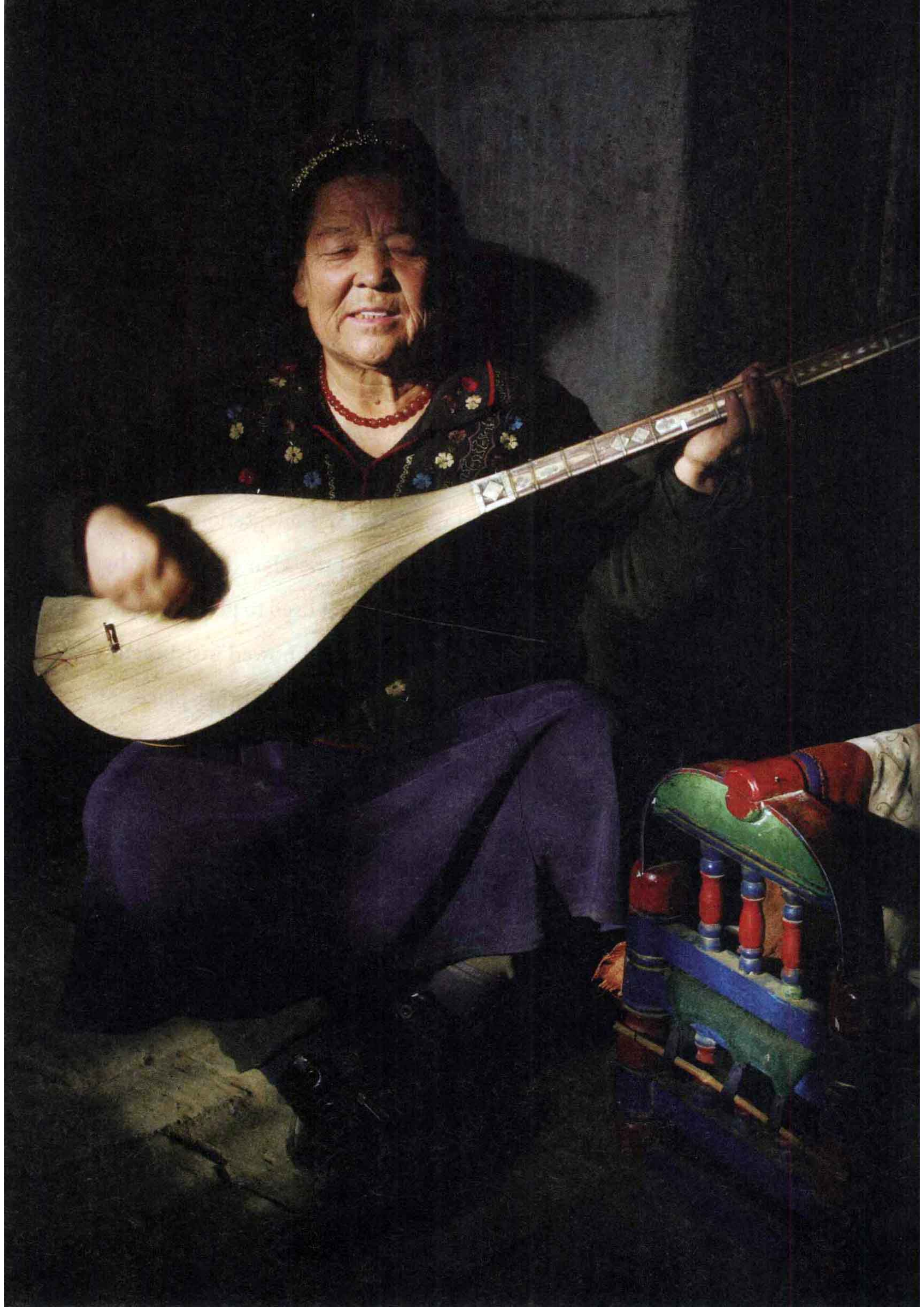


Some instruments for playing Muqam

Huaxia people that distinguished it from other Qiang tribes. For this reason, history books of the Han language described details of surrounding minority groups, including their hair, different hats, materials and shapes of their clothing, housing and food. In terms of clothing, the Han people had an opening on the right side of their garments while nomadic peoples had it on the left side for the convenience of mounting a horse. It is special that the opening of Hami women's clothes is on the right side, showing the cultural integration of the Han and minority groups.

"A unique characteristic for the Hami Muqams is that it has Han-language lyrics, showing the interaction and integration between the music in Hami, even its culture, and the Han culture of the Central Plains."[41] Hami Aijak, an instrument used to play the Hami Muqams, is similar to huqin (a two-stringed bowed instrument) of the Han people, but is different from Aijak in other places of Xinjiang.

41. Zhou Ji: *Muqams*, published by Zhejiang People's Press in 2005, p.50.



Chapter VI
The Passing of a Great Soul

Xinjiang, dancing in a whirling skirt

photo by Zhou Lijie

Because of Muqam,

The rolling mountains have company, and

The boundless desert dissolves frowns,

Awakened by the Muqam music and singing,

The world is revived,

Filled with tender love and painful hope.

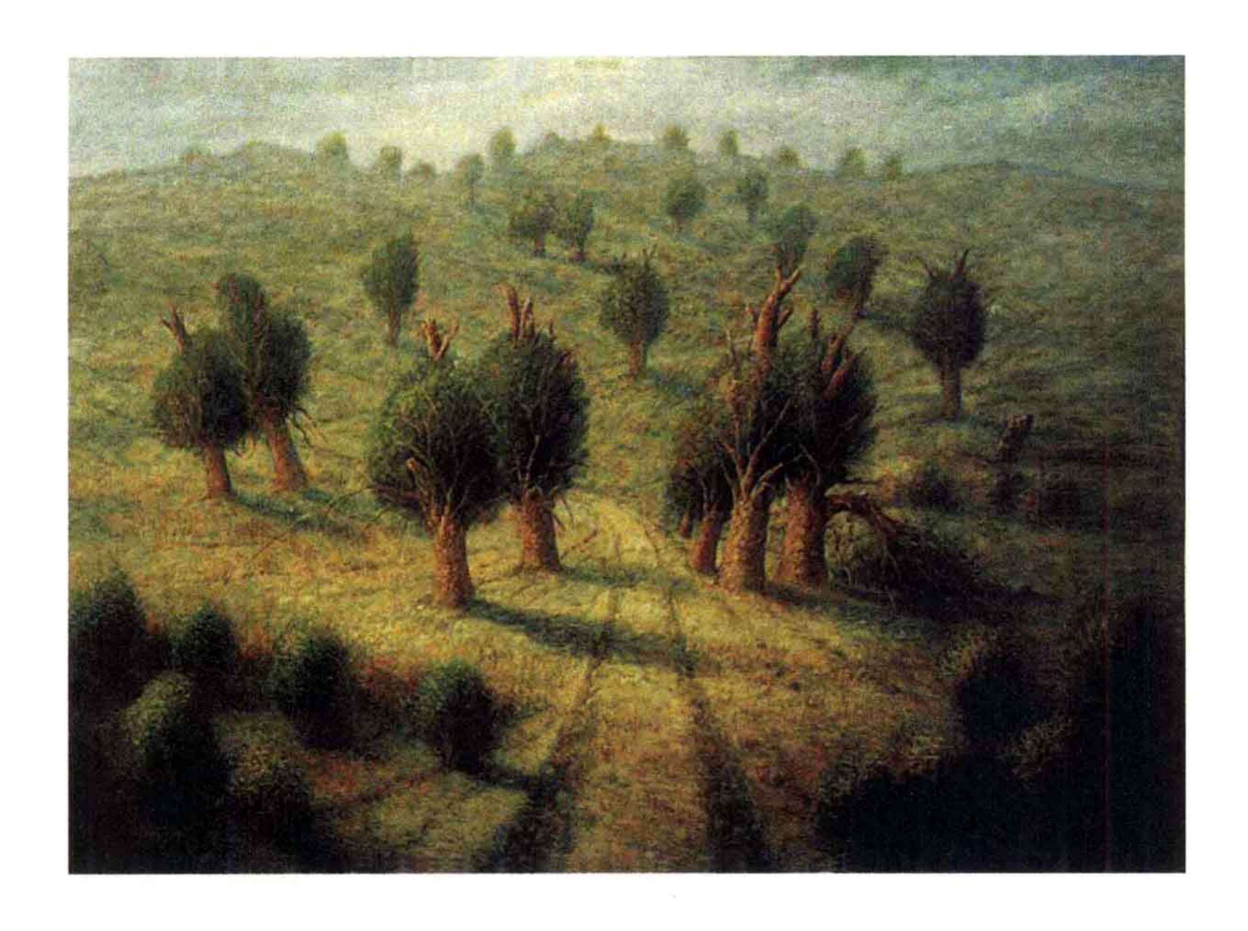
That is us alive,

Living for the eternal Muqam.[42]

Xinjiang is primarily associated with world famous singing and dancing. The exotic songs and dances always seem to leave a deep impression on the viewer's memory. An image of Xinjiang materializes when we imagine the echoing folk songs and the dancers in their whirling skirts. Singing and dancing characterize Xinjiang's soul and spirit, epitomizing its temperament and alluring charm.

Xinjiang singing and dancing has impressed the world since ancient times. As early as in the Tang Dynasty, a large number of imperial musicians were from Xiyu, "including Qiuci musician Bai Mingda and Shule pipa player Pei Shenfu; Xiyu musicians were also commonly seen in *jiaofang* (imperial music office) and Pear

42. Wang Meng:Muqam, 1978.



Garden (imperial performing theater)."[43]

At the time when Monk Xuanzang was on his pilgrimage for Buddhist scriptures in India, there was a popular piece of music called *Prince Qin Breaking through the Enemy Array*. Composed by the Tang imperial court, it was synthesized with Xiyu music elements and written to praise the great deeds of Prince Li Shimin of the Tang Dynasty. Historically, Xiyu singing and dancing had an influence on inland China much greater than it does today, especially when the Central Imperial Court was effectively ruling

A path in sunshine, painted by Liu Yong

43. See *The Popularity of Xiyu Music in Tang Dynasty* by Zhao Mingshan, P184.



Street performer, painted by Nijat · Hushur

over Xiyu in its prosperous heyday. In those years, people had a precise understanding of all kinds of Xiyu music. They would never have done something so amateur as confusing Gaochang Music with Qiuci Music or other oasis music, for example. It is a shame, because, besides those specializing in Xinjiang music, most people in the music circles today are not capable of differentiating between various kinds of Uyghur music. Even an overwhelming majority of the Han people living in Xinjiang are incapable of distinguishing between one type and another. Of course, since the cultural status of music differs strikingly throughout various historical stages, the contrast may be insignificant. Rather, it indicates the fact that Xinjiang got its fame as "land of singing and dancing" from its profound past.

To analyze further, this impression was drawn from the Silk Road in an era where land-transport was dominant. Various authorities relied heavily on the Silk Road because the Four Great Ancient Civilizations met there. Ever since the Silk Road on the sea opened, the rapid colonial expansion on the sea caused the Silk Road on the land to fall into dreariness. Xiyu was "forgotten by the world," and this ushered in a true seclusion era for the oasis of solitude. In turbulent modern times, years of civil disorder in

Xinjiang caused severe economic damage and cultural depression; Xinjiang singing and dancing as well as the eminent Muqam art were forced into an all-time low. In the 1950s, the Muqam art (especially Congnaghman in the Twelve Muqams) was close to extinction, and Muqam artists met a miserable fate.

Those who are looking for us,
Please go to the Gobi Desert where we seek haven from disasters,
And the valleys and grasslands where we live in exile and solitude.[44]

Muqam artists were withering; Muqam art was dying.

Music has a distinctive feature—synchronism. The best way to record music is to keep its performers. However, life is short, and arts die as artists pass away. The other way to record music is to preserve its audio materials. Before Thomas Edison invented the phonograph in autumn 1877, music history was soundless. Due to frequent and complicated ethnic and linguistic changes, there is no written notation left for melody study in the Western Region. Literary and historic records about Xiyu music were mainly described using Chinese characters. Improvisational performing

44. Lyrics from Panxilu in Bayat Muqam.



Dolan Mashrep, painted by Abdukirem · Nesirdin



and oral teaching also added difficulties to the annotation of Muqam. We still have problems with details in Muqam notation today, even with the invention of phonographic marks.

Therefore, the inheritance of Muqam is in a desperate situation coming to a dead end. After the founding of New China in 1949, a Muqam artist was recommended to the then Governor of Xinjiang, Saifuddin Azizi. As Xinjiang required support from the central government and the Ministry of Culture, the central government sent Wan Tongshu and other representative musicians to Xinjiang for music study and notation.

Ahung Turdi

The recommended folk artist was Muqam master Ahung Turdi (1881-1956).

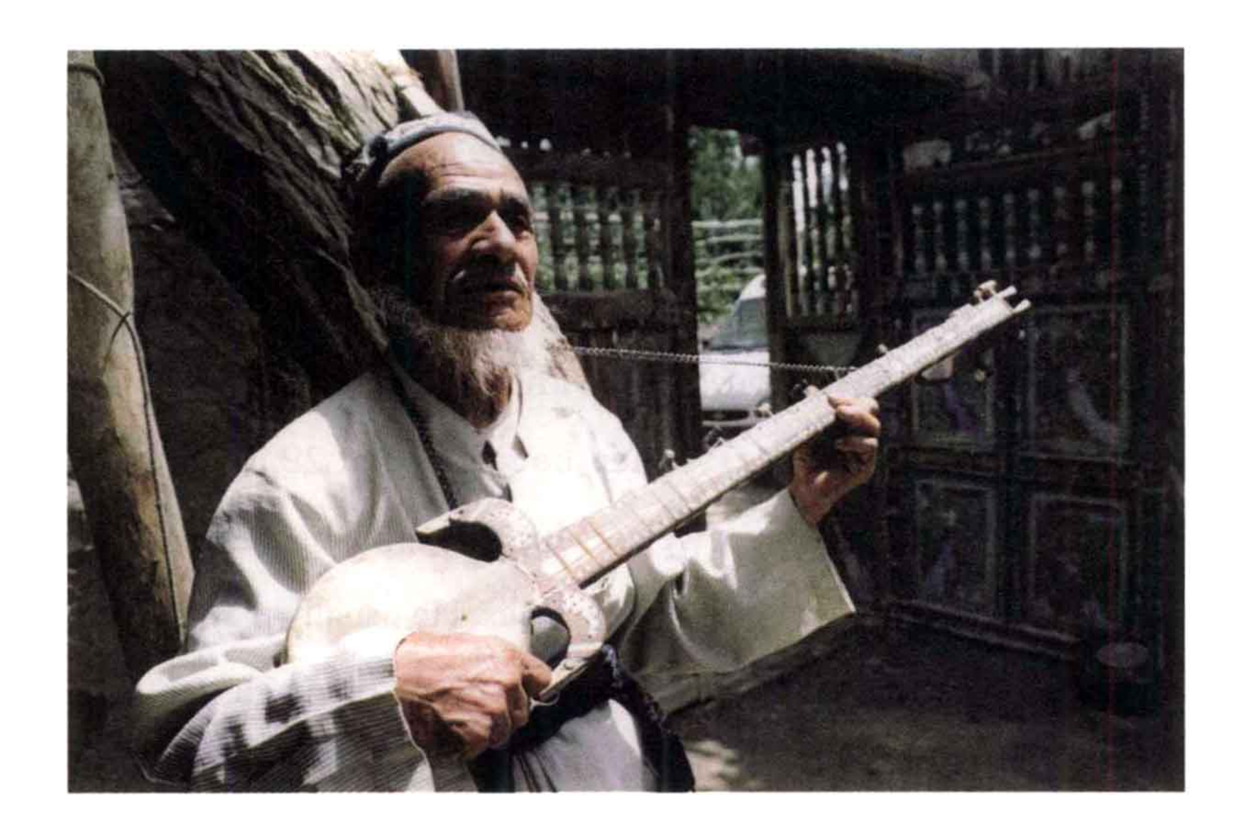
According to the family history that he dictated and from other resources, Turdi was the fifth-generation artist in this family of Muqam prodigies. The first-generation practitioner was Imam Ibrayin, the eldest brother of Turdi's great grandfather. He was an incomparably skillful folk kalong (a major Muqam musical instrument) player, hence his name. His date of birth and death is unknown. It was said that he lived all his life in Yarkant County, and passed away at the age of 92. He was a knowledgeable man who always explained his Muqam lyrics during every performance. He used to travel to many places on horse to give Muqam performances. He was also an imam in his mosque.

The second-generation Muqam practitioner was Imam Hashim, Turdi's great grandfather. Date of birth and death unknown, he also lived in Yarkant County, not quite educated but not illiterate. He was skilled at playing satar and trained many apprentices, thus reputed as "Imam Hashim" He died at the age of 78, after having contributed indelibly to the improvement of Uyghur musical instruments.

The third-generation Muqam practitioner was Imam Kawul, Turdi's

grandfather. He was extremely intelligent. He learned Muqam by heart and also played various Uyghur musical instruments and folk music pieces. He lived to the age of 85 years old.

The fourth-generation Muqam practitioner was Imam Tewekkul (1843-1931), Turdi's father. He enjoyed great reputation among Muqam performers and in music circles in southern Xinjiang, and was acknowledged as the most learned musician and Muqam master. Born in Kashi, he studied in an Islamic school from age six to 16. After 16, he dedicated his life to developing Muqam art and training Muqam successors. He applied Uyghur ballads and poems written by classical literary pioneers and Uyghur poets to Muqam lyrics, making the latter more comprehensible to the ordinary audience. He was good at all kinds of Uyghur musical instruments, especially satar. He performed in southern Xinjiang all his life, particularly in Kashi and Yengisar. Among his apprentices, the most famous were brothers Imam Helim or Alim and Imam Selim, and Maula Memet from Kashi, and Setiwal from Yarkant, who were also his partners in his performing troupe composed of folk artisans, traveling destitute and homeless, submitted to their fate. He married three times in his life. His first and second wives were childless, and his third wife Tillahan gave him two sons. The elder



was the later Muqam master Turdi, while the younger was Imam Yimin. He taught them Muqam at a young age; to make them earn their own living by Muqam performance, he designated Hotan, Yecheng, Yarkant and Yengisar as his elder son's performing areas, and Kashi and Aksu for his younger son. The two brothers traveled to different areas to perform, and never got an opportunity to meet again after embarking on separate paths. Imam Tewekkul lived a lonely and poor life in his later years, and passed away in Yengisar at the age of 88.

Turdi is the fifth-generation Muqam practitioner in this family. He

A rewapu player

was born in Yengisar County and began to learn playing Uyghur musical instruments from his father at the age of six. He began to learn Twelve Muqams at 12, and attended various festive parties and Mashrep with his father, performing as the drummer. Four years later, his father replaced him with his younger brother Yimin during their performances. When he married at 20, he became proficient in performing Twelve Muqams, and began to travel around to teach Muqam performing skills. He usually played satar, which is the major musical instrument to play Congnaghman.

In 1939, Turdi moved to Yecheng with his family. Performers from various areas in Xinjiang came to him in admiration. However, life got so tough for him that he had to pawn his precious satar many times. In 1949 when the People's Republic of China was founded, he went all the way to Urumqi despite his old age, and presented the experts from Beijing a Twelve Muqams performance.

Since then, under the instruction of the central government, the Publicity Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the Ministry of Culture made every effort to collect and compile the Twelve Muqam pieces. They even sent someone to Shanghai specifically to bring back an old-fashioned wire recorder deposited by the American troops.

Wan Tongshu got a metronome with the help of Lü Ji, who was the chairman of the Chinese Music Association at the time. Liu Chi and Liu Feng, who were collecting folk songs in Xi'an at that time, and together with musician Ding Xin spent four months in recording the complete set of Twelve Muqams.[45]

As the team leader and the most important compiler, Wan Tongshu devoted himself wholeheartedly to the compilation of Twelve Muqams, browsing the voluminous audio materials. He spent four years from 1952 to 1956 on notation. Due to the number of years that he spent hunched over his desk, he became severely short-sighted and the left region of his chest became deformed. Besides Wan, a large number of experts on ethnic music, languages and dancing participated in compiling the Muqam lyrics. Over the past 50 years, the central government has been supportive in the fields of research, translation and compilation of Muqams. Muqam performance has also been staged and videotaped for academic research and exchange. Major stage activities in Xinjiang also draw inspiration from Muqam performance.

An account of these 50 years of Muqam compilation alone would be a huge book in several volumes.

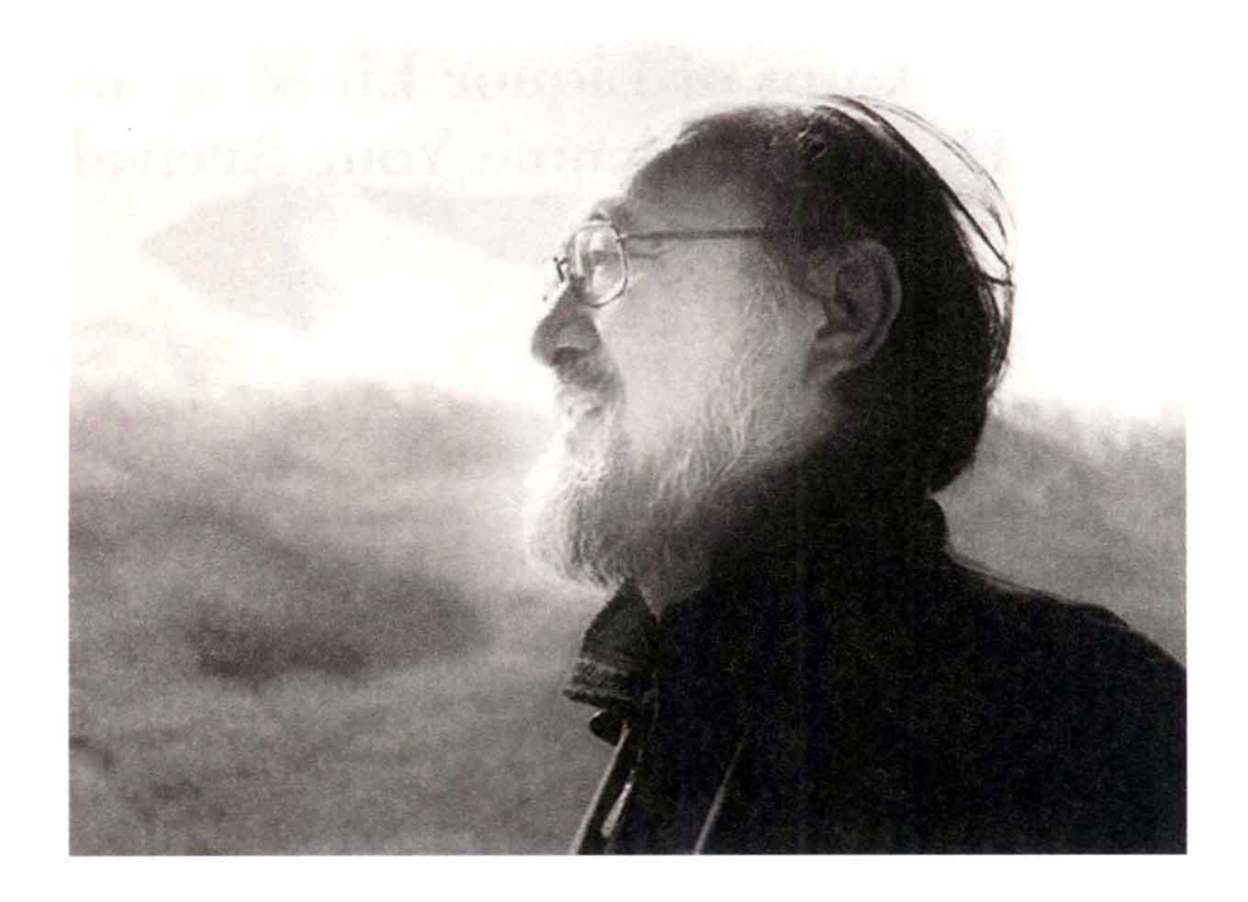
45. See *Twelve Muqams and Its Exponents* by Emaitjan Ahrmat, *A Study in Uyghur Muqam* compiled by Liu Kuili and Liang Ying, published by Central University for Nationalities Press, 1997, P208.

Zhou Ji is an honest and upright man, like an oasis rose with a strong fragrance and sharp thorns.

Cups of Liquor Lined up in Heaven Welcome Your Arrival

At 10 in the morning on May 5, 2008, when I was about to start my lecture for the intangible cultural heritage protection training class, Executive Vice President of the China Conservatory of Music, Zhao Tarim called. There was a moment of silence before he spoke. Then, he said, "Zhou Ji passed away." Suddenly, my heart was almost broken. "When?" "Early this morning."

When I went to class, I told the news to the trainees as most of them were old friends of Zhou Ji. Then, I sent someone to report it to related supervisors and to buy airline tickets, as I was planning to fly to Beijing immediately with my colleagues and Zhou Ji's family so as to arrange a memorial ceremony for him. I was too grieved to go on with my lecture.



The sunny morning suddenly became gloomy.

Many people called one after another. Governor of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Nur Bekri, who was in a meeting at that time, sent us a message to express his condolences to Zhou Ji's family. Mehemetimin, Head of Xinjiang Muqam Art Troupe, asked whether we could bring Zhou Ji's body back by freezing it with ice. Adili Wuxor, who had just come to my office to say goodbye before his business trip abroad, was shocked when I told

Zhou Ji, a man of strong will and great talent

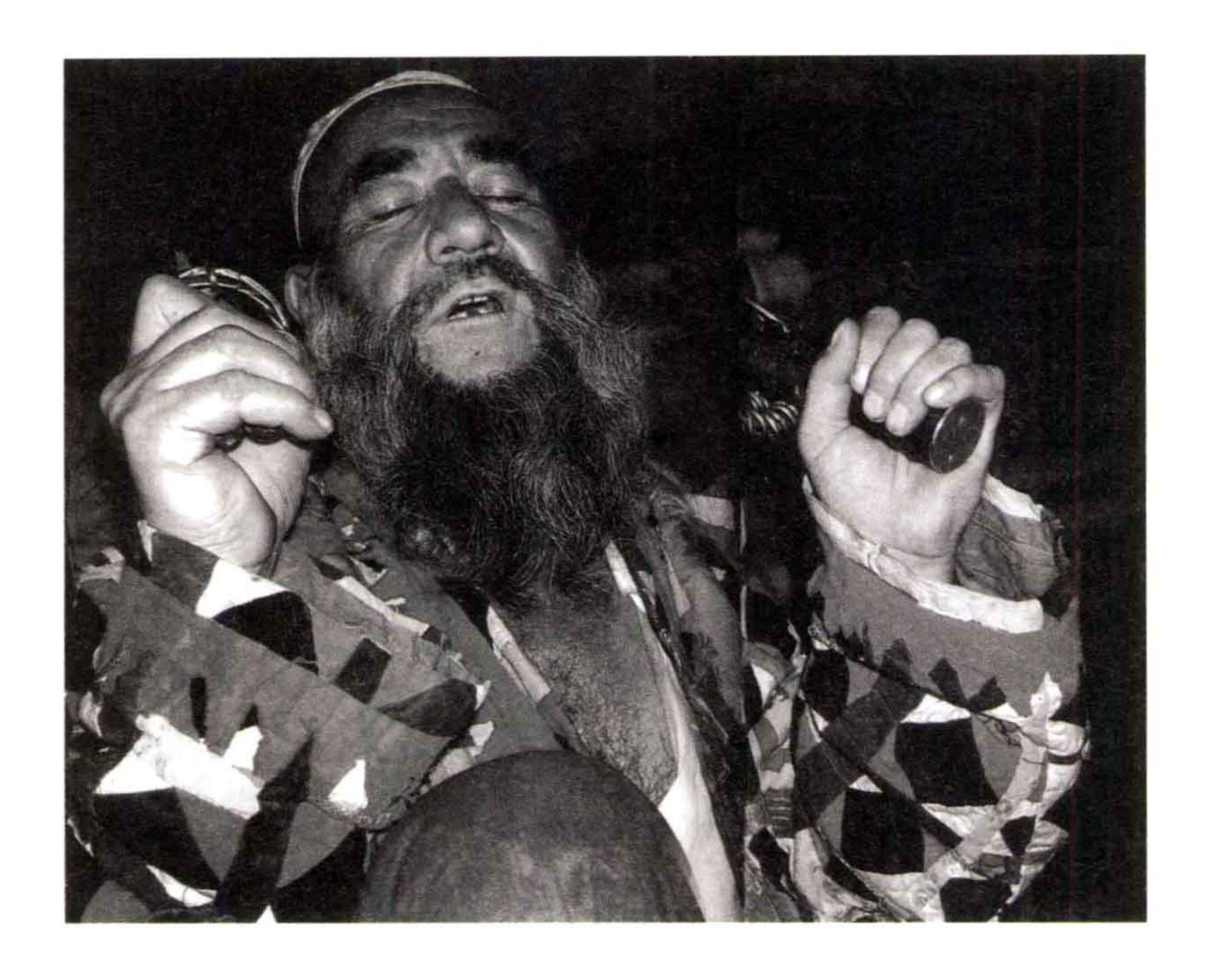
him the news. His eyes turned red as they filled with stinging tears. Everyone distracted themselves with Zhou Ji's funeral arrangements in order to mask their deep grief.

One day in the 1990s, I went to the Overseas Chinese Hotel to attend a seminar on Muqam symphony as an administrative secretary of the Publicity Department. I was late. The seats were almost all taken, so I sat down in a corner. While introducing the guests at the meeting, a man with a big beard presiding over the meeting pointed at me and asked, "Who are you?" "I'm from the Arts Division of the Publicity Department," I replied. "I know, but your name?" I told him my name, but he had no intention of asking me to sit in the front row. This Big Beard was Zhou Ji who never bowed down to authority.

In 2000, I began to work in the Culture Department and made a lot of friends. Zhou Ji was one of them, and he always gave me forthright admonition. While most intellectuals were at officials' beck and call at that time, Zhou Ji always spoke his true feelings. He acquired much knowledge from his work and liked drinking wine. He had a strong yet charming personality. We were both on

the academic title review board, and met for this event every year. At that time, the Xinjiang Philharmonic Orchestra was not very popular among the art troupes and institutions in the autonomous region, and its members had few opportunities to attend national competitions, not to mention winning national awards. Sticking to the rigid rules in appraisal would definitely result in brain drain, which was not favorable for carrying forward Xinjiang performing arts. So as director of the review board, I tried to persuade him not to be too strict. He agreed in spite of his reluctance. The then Head of Xinjiang Philharmonic Orchestra Nusret treated us to dinner in their VIP dining room, which was very generous, and even ordered some wine for us. Surprisingly enough, Zhou Ji didn't do us the favor but instead became stricter during the appraisal in the afternoon meeting. Later I told Nusret that Zhou Ji was a conscientious person and became even more of a stickler for details after drinking wine.

While still in the midst of applying for Muqam's status as world cultural heritage, we examined the application file he drafted word by word, and went to Beijing to discuss



various issues with the experts many times. Zhou Ji argued with them over single words, expressions or special terms, thus impressing them with his obstinacy. Zhou Ji's peak in the field of Muqam research came after he retired from the position of deputy director of the research institute. He was a good man, honest and upright, talented and straightforward. He had a strong sense of justice and never disguised his true feelings, even if it meant coming off as

photo by Dang Chenghua

tactless. But he did have a problem in approaching things in spite of his good intentions. To be honest, management was not one of his strong points. Since Li Jilian took office as director, he had been able to concentrate on his research. Jilian did a good job in the organization, coordination and management of the Muqam application for world heritage and the Uyghur Song and Dance research project. She was a tactful ice-breaker skilled in handling difficult people and tough situations. During this period, her mother and mother-in-law passed away in succession. She rushed to meetings as soon as she came out of the funeral parlor. In contrast, Zhou Ji was so concentrated on shooting the application video that he had not been aware of his chilblain caused by the bitter cold until he was sent to the hospital. I went to see him in the hospital, his beard and hair all shaved, his head, ears and hands covered with black ointment.... It could never forget those hard days.

In April, 2008, the Culture Department and Urumqi Library jointly held a cultural seminar, and invited Zhou Ji to give a lecture on Muqam. His lecture with live music demonstration was very successful. After the lecture, he

said "I want Muqam music played at my funeral." What a grief that his wish has been fulfilled!

Several days later, I met him at the expert consultation meeting for the China Xinjiang Uyghur Muqam Art Database program jointly initiated by the Culture Department and Central Conservatory of Music. He had just returned after giving a lecture in Hong Kong. We drank half a bottle of Langyatai liquor each. Although I had quit drinking liquor, when I got together with Lao Duan, Zhou Ji and Lao Liu, I would shift to liquor. Bonding through drinking is an ongoing classical tradition inherited from ancient times. That night, we drank to our heart's content, and I promised to send Zhou Ji a box of liquor as a gift...

In early May, 2008, I sent Lao Ma to ask Zhou Ji to fax his personal opinion about the related origins of Muqam and Mashrep as academic reference for the Mashrep application for world cultural heritage. Well, I got a reply with only four lines. I asked "What's wrong with 'Uncle Zhou' ? Why only four lines?" Lao Ma said, "Maybe he's too busy. Wait till he comes back."

Zhou Ji, since you are gone, what should we do with the Muqam database? And the national key research project on Uyghur Song and Dance? Since you have left, Muqam has lost its true appreciator; the folk artists on the oasis have lost a friend... We feel alone without you.

Zhou Ji, born in Jiangsu Province, went to Xinjiang at the age of 16 and died at 66. He never went to college, but taught at the Central Conservatory of Music, China Conservatory of Music, Xinjiang Normal University and Xinjiang Arts Institute. He was a Han person from southeast China but also the son of the Western Region people. He was the perfect combination of all Chinese ethnic cultures.

All related arrangements for Zhou Ji's memorial ceremony had been made, but we still needed an elegiac couplet in the mourning hall to pay our last respect at Babaoshan Cemetery. Jilian called, asking me to write it. Lao Ma and I wracked our brains but failed to produce a perfect one. We had too much emotion to express.

At last, Zhou Ji's best friend Tian Qing wrote one in spite of his illness: "Qiuci Music thrives in China through

your efforts; Cups of liquor lined up in Heaven welcome your arrival." The couplet was so full of literary wit that it crossed the line between life and death, but Lao Ma still wondered whether it was appropriate to mention liquor in a mourning hall. I thought, however, Zhou Ji would like it if he had heard it. Do you, Zhou Ji?

Spring is coming. The road to Heaven is paved with flowers. Zhou Ji, enjoy your voyage!

Dedicated to Zhou Ji,

first drafted on May 5, 2008
final revised on May 6, 2008

Acknowledgements:

Sincere gratitude is offered to the painters and photographers, and those who have provided additional photographs, without whom this book would not have been so colorful.

These include Kurbanjan, Zhao Qin, Hazi Aimaiti, Dang Chenghua, Abdurihim Yimingjiang, Zhao Junan, Shen Qiao, Niu Jun, Liang Li, Wang Yongsheng, Keyim·Kadir, Chen Hao, Yalikun Hazi, Huang Jianxin, Abdukirem·Nesirdin, Wei Kaizhong, Xiao Gu, Liu Yong, Nijat·Hushur, and Zhou Lijie.

Traditional Xinjiang Uyghur

MUQAM




ISBN 978-7-119-06866-4
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